METAL HAMMER

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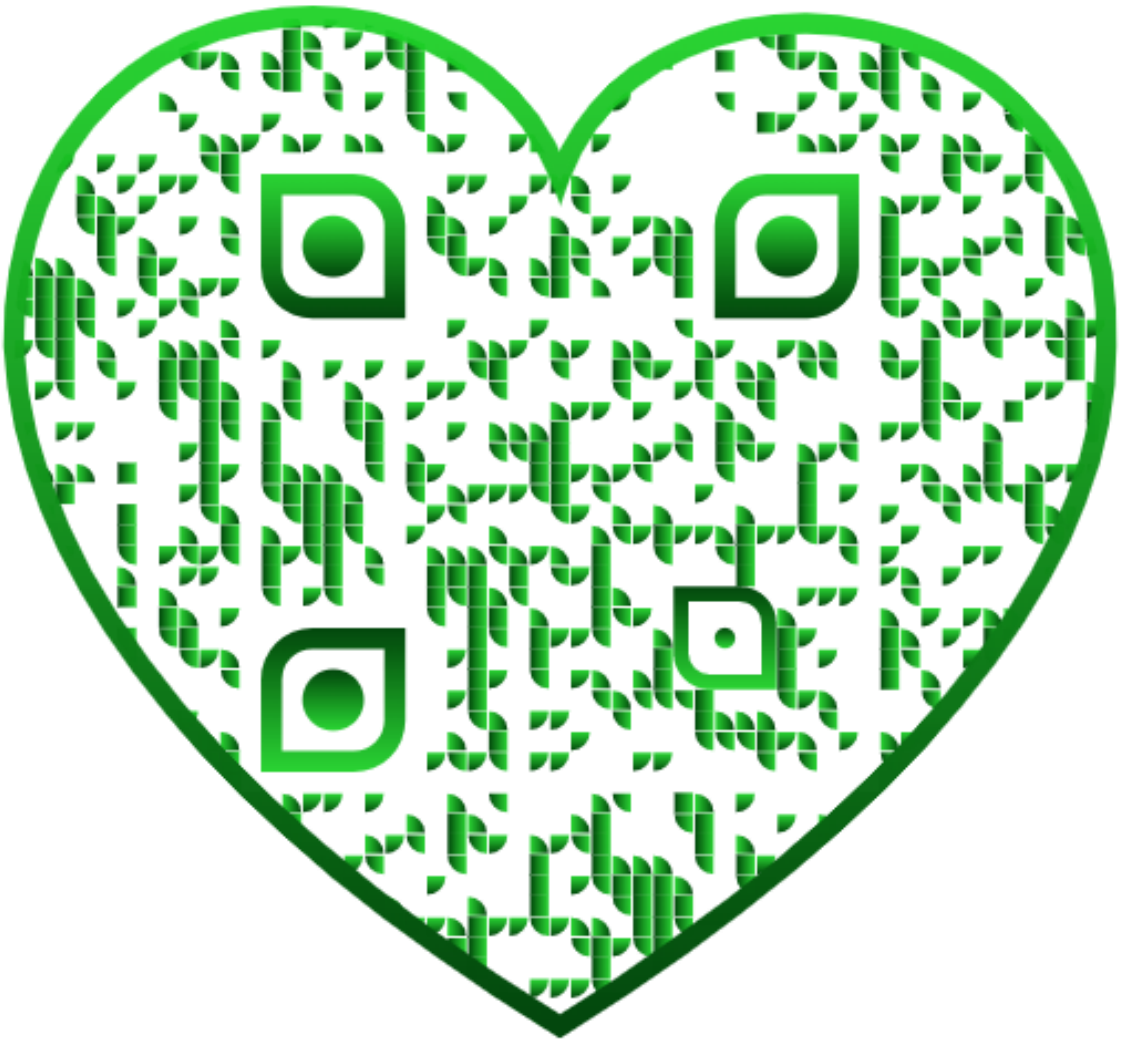
MACHINE HEAD

UNITED THEY STAND

THE CHAOS OF BURN MY EYES "COPS WERE CHASING ME DOWN"

FUTURE
ISSUE 323



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IT WAS A SHOTGUN BLAST

REMEMBER THE FIRST time you heard *Davidian*? Metal has never been the same since Machine Head unleashed that unbelievable slab of thrashy, groove-riddled noise, and 25 years on, that track and the album that bore it have lost none of their potency or influence. It's no surprise to find that as Robb Flynn looks to rebuild Machine Head in the wake of last year's turbulent breakdown, he's also taking the chance to celebrate *Burn My Eyes*, an album that has meant so much to him, his band and, of course, millions of metal fans around the world.

It spurred us to dedicate this issue to the year that changed metal forever. 1994 can be credited as the year that brought us nu metal, established extreme metal on the world stage, introduced us to the likes of Marilyn Manson, Rammstein and In Flames, and not to mention establishing legacies for the likes of Nine Inch Nails, Pantera, Soundgarden… shit, the list just goes on, doesn't it? Trust us: by the time you've read every page of this month's magazine, you'll be searching for your old Discman, breaking into your mum's attic to find your stash of Pogs and trading Panini stickers with whoever you can find.

Cheers, fuckers, and…

HORNS UP!

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MEET THE BAND

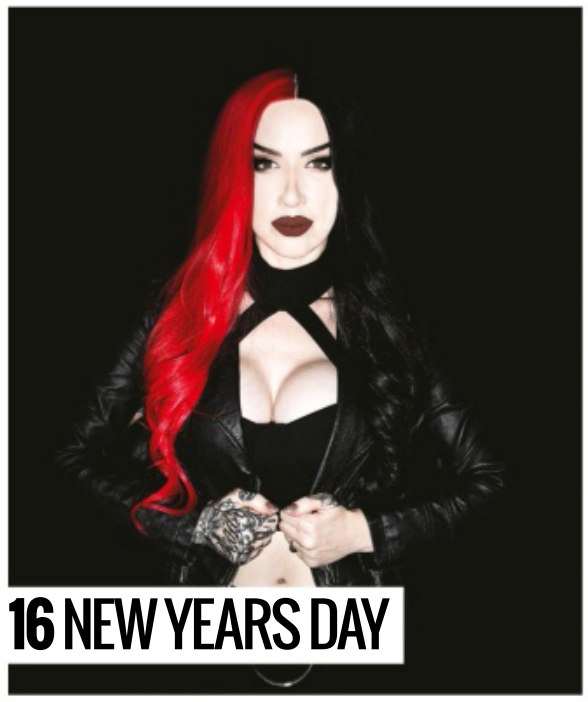
MALCOLM DOME
WRITER
A *Hammer* legend, Malcolm has been at the frontlines of metal journalism for over three decades – in fact, if the stories are to be believed, he's the man who coined the term 'thrash metal'. Although whatever happened to *that* subgenre is anyone's guess…

TRAVIS SHINN
PHOTOGRAPHER
Our West Coast tog has become a first-choice snapper for many of the US bands you will see in *Hammer*, and this issue is no exception – he shot this month's Machine Head cover feature! He also shot a ton of their promo pics, so they obviously like him. Fair fucks.

DANNII LEIVERS
WRITER
Our Dannii has become one of *Metal Hammer*'s most loyal and reliable scribes in the years we've had her, and there's rarely a week that goes by where she isn't seen raising horns and beaming grins at metal gigs all over the place. Warrior.

38 MACHINE HEAD

70 THERAPY?



16 NEW YEARS DAY

10 MAX CAVALERA

CONT

FRONT ROW

8 Find out how **HOME OF METAL** is honouring the mighty Sabbath.

10 Um, dois, três... **MAX CAVALERA** answers 15 of *your* questions.

14 Worship at the metal AF record collection of Zeal & Ardor's **MANUEL GAGNEUX**.

16 **ASH COSTELLO** asks herself: what would Marilyn Manson do?

20 We go deep in the studio with Norwegian black metallers **1349**.

22 How **LAMB OF GOD**'s *Laid To Rest* became absolutely massive.

30 Welcome to the Satanic Dutch black metal of **ASAGRAUM**.

FEATURES

38 It seemed like it was all over for **MACHINE HEAD**, but you can't keep Robb Flynn down...

46 We revisit MH's explosive debut, **BURN MY EYES**.

50 We celebrate the other legendary albums of **1994**, from grunge to black metal and beyond.

58 Recorded at the infamous Tate house, **NINE INCH NAILS**' *The Downward Spiral* reached haunting new industrial depths.

64 Three members of **EMPEROR** were in prison by the time *In The Nightside Eclipse* was released.

90 BARONESS

64 EMPEROR

ENTS

70 **THERAPY?** were just three punks from Northern Ireland. So how did *Troublegum* conquer the world?

76 Breaking away from Iron Maiden, **BRUCE DICKINSON** knew *Balls To Picasso* had to succeed.

82 **WOODSTOCK '94** was the mud bath that baptised the alternative nation.

ALBUM REVIEWS

90 Savannah hue metal champions **BARONESS** go for glory.

92 **CAVE IN** make a last stand for late bassist Caleb Scofield.

98 Gaahl makes an unexpected yet great return with **GAAHLS WYRD**.

100 **HEART OF A COWARD** hoist the UK metal flag high.

101 **MOTIONLESS IN WHITE** seek industrial inspiration.

LIVE REVIEWS

112 **SLEEP**, **AT THE GATES** and **HEILUNG** bring wonder to Tilburg's Roadburn festival.

114 **DEVIN TOWNSEND** binds the intimate and the epic.

117 Can **IN FLAMES** retain their melodeth crown?

119 **PAPA ROACH** seek magic beyond the nostalgic.

76 BRUCE DICKINSON

SUBSCRIBE NOW & SAVE

Head to p.36 for details

82 WOODSTOCK '94

112 ROADBURN FESTIVAL

UNSC

THE BIG PICTURE

THE LONELY COWBOY

JUNE 4, 1994. Donington. Monsters Of Rock. On a stage made famous by poodle-haired, spandex and leather-wearing rock behemoths, a shaven-headed, shorts-wearing, tattooed Phil Anselmo stands, solemnly, bottle of booze in hand, as tens of thousands of metalheads look on. It became an image that perfectly encapsulated the drastic change that metal was undergoing: musically, aesthetically and even culturally. While Pantera didn't quite steal the show that day (see page 70 for *that* unexpected story), their ascension to becoming *the* standard-bearers for heavy music was continuing apace. Metal was in the midst of an evolution. It would never be the same again.

ICONICPIX

THE HOT TOPIC

HOMECOMING

Birmingham's Home Of Metal initiative reveal more details of their epic celebration of Black Sabbath

WORDS: MERLIN ALDERSLADE

SINCE ITS INCEPTION in 2011, designed to celebrate more than four decades of metal history and its impact on the UK, Home Of Metal has proudly stood as our country's most significant monument to heavy music's importance to British culture. Now they're unveiling their biggest celebration yet: a "blockbuster" exhibition honouring the Godfathers Of Metal themselves, Black Sabbath.

"The exhibition celebrates Black Sabbath from the perspective of their fans," notes the official press release, "to show the impact and cultural legacy of the band as pioneers of heavy metal, and to celebrate this unique, significant part of British music heritage."

Given that Home Of Metal is based in Birmingham, the birthplace of our favourite genre, it makes perfect sense to celebrate the band that started it all as the 50 Years Of Metal celebrations we kicked off this year continue apace.

"My mission has always been to create a permanent visitor attraction celebrating the Home of Metal," says HOM founder Lisa Meyer, "but I've had a lot of pushback from the powers-that-be in Birmingham, claiming that it'd only attract old white men and it'd be a very small, 'niche' audience. So I set out to prove them wrong by capturing portraits of Sabbath fans from around the world to show just how vibrant and diverse the genre is. Black Sabbath sold more than a million tickets on their final tour and played 74 shows around the world – that's pretty significant. This Home of Metal exhibition focuses on celebrating 50 years of Black Sabbath, their legacy and the fans."

Fan collections like this one feature in the Home Of Metal

With Black Sabbath officially ending their illustrious, near-five-decade career in 2017, there has been plenty of time for reflection on the legacy created by Ozzy Osbourne, Tony Iommi, Geezer Butler and Bill Ward, who almost singlehandedly invented metal as we know it. For this event, however, Lisa felt it was important to focus in on the importance of Sabbath's homeland and the impact it had on their music.

"BLACK SABBATH ARE THE ULTIMATE OUTSIDERS"

Black Sabbath: you may have heard of them...

Lisa Meyer: working tirelessly to make sure heavy metal is celebrated

"THE EXHIBITION LOOKS specifically at Black Sabbath's relationship to Birmingham in the 60s," she notes. "The multitudes of terraced houses, located within walking distance of the many factories steeped in the city's metal-bashing industry with a backdrop dominated by the bombsites left untouched since the Second World War. These bombsites became playgrounds for Aston's children; for them, rubble and partial buildings were simply the natural, dreary backdrop to their home.

"We look at the alchemy of Sabbath," she continues, "examining what each original member uniquely brought to the band, whether it be Ozzy's showmanship, Geezer's lyrics, Tony's downtuned guitar playing or Bill's jazz-inspired drumming. But, equally, we celebrate the fans, and through their collections and stories, we celebrate a global community and the camaraderie of metal."

Lisa is no stranger to honouring Sabbath, having presented Tony Iommi with the Golden God award at the *Metal Hammer* Golden Gods in 2017 –

BLACK SABBATH: GETTY. TONY IOMMI: WILL IRELAND. BABYMETAL: PRESS. NIKKI SIXX: PR

Lisa and Tony at *Hammer*'s Golden Gods. We're still hungover.

something she says was "terrifying, but a true honour."

"Ozzy, Tony, Geezer and Bill have all been incredibly supportive of Home Of Metal and the exhibition, as have their teams," she says. "There's been a lot of hard work going on behind the scenes to root out old stage costumes and other key items. They love their fans and so want to make sure this is a great experience for people visiting. I think they are appreciative of being recognised and celebrated in this way. Tony and his manager, Ralph, have been particularly supportive of Home Of Metal, from the very first exhibition in 2011. Despite all the success the band has achieved, they are all genuinely humble guys with an incredible sense of humour. They're just great Brummies!"

There's plenty more to come from Home Of Metal too, with more galleries, exhibitions and special projects planned in the coming weeks and months. For Lisa, it's all about showing the world why heavy metal can finally start getting the credit it deserves.

"Black Sabbath famously received terrible press in the early part of their career," she points out. "They are the ultimate outsiders and have always done things on their own terms. Heavy metal embraces the marginalised, so perhaps it's is difficult for mainstream society to embrace us. Metal has never been fashionable so it's never been out of fashion! It's more than just music: it's a way of life for millions, and once you're a fan you're always a fan. It gets passed on from generation to generation. Long may it thrive."

We couldn't have put it better.

HOME OF METAL'S BLACK SABBATH EXHIBITION OPENS ON JUNE 26 AT THE BIRMINGHAM MUSEUM AND ART GALLERY. FIND OUT MORE AT WWW.HOMEOFMETAL.COM

10 THINGS WE LEARNED THIS MONTH

What's been blowing our tiny brains

IS IT ACTUALLY DOWNLOAD NEXT MONTH?
It is, isn't it? How the fuck did that happen? We're not ready to say bye to Slayer yet, you bastards! Arghhh!

WE NEED TO SEE THOSE NEW 'KNOT MASKS
Who knows how Mick's will have evolved this time... oh...

BABYMETAL ARE PROPERLY BACK
New single! Fewer members! It's all booting off for our favourite Japanese metal phenomenon. They're over in the UK this summer, too.

Babymetal. Yes, this is Babymetal. Do not adjust your magazine

SATANISM IS COOL AGAIN
According to new movie *Hail Satan?*. At least we'll get some good new memes.

SABATON LOVE BOATS
Especially big war ones, according to recent new video, *Bismarck*.

GLASTO IS METAL
Gojira! Venom Prison! Employed To Serve! Glasto is fully embracing the heavy and we are, as the kids put it, here for it.

NIKKI SIXX LOVES A SCRAP
Nikki vs Kiss. Nikki vs old Ozzy guitarists. It's like 1985 never went away!

ICELAND ARE BRILLIANT
For entering this year's heaviest Eurovision entry, Hatari. Seriously, it's like us sending The Defiled or something. Also, we miss The Defiled.

OZZY'S UK TOUR IS BACK ON
Wheeey! But not until next year. Awwww. But Priest are still on it! Wheeeeey!

TOOL ARE PLAYING NEW STUFF LIVE
Well, they said they might when we went to press. Who knows what's going on.

Nikki Sixx: who's up for fisticuffs?

PIZZA OR BURGERS?

...plus more incisive questions thrown by *Hammer*'s readers at Sepultura, Soulfly and Cavalera Conspiracy legend, Max Cavalera

WORDS: THEO PAGE

MAX CAVALERA IS a living metal legend. It's as simple as that. Through redefining metal with Sepultura and since kicking ass with the likes of Soulfly, Nailbomb, Cavalera Conspiracy and metal supergroup Killer Be Killed, he's remained one of our world's most prolific mainstays. In August, he'll be bringing Soulfly to Derbyshire for this year's Bloodstock festival, but in the meantime, how will he fare fending off questions about fast food, crazy gigs and turning the big 5-0?

When will the new Killer Be Killed album be done?
Brennon Hayes, Facebook
"We have already made some demos. We've got about 12 new songs done, it sounds killer and way more involved. Troy [Sanders] wasn't as involved in the first one, it was mostly me and Greg [Puciato] in the beginning, but I'm a big Mastodon fan, a big Troy fan, so I want him involved, so now he's bringing a lot to the table. He wrote a song that sounds like old Judas Priest, it's killer."

Has your concept of heavy metal been the same since you started your career, back in the early days of Sepultura, or changed?
Ricardo Tavares Da Silva, Facebook
"It's been the same. I'm still a fan at heart, I feel like I'm still 15 years old again listening to heavy metal – I never grew up and I don't want to! I don't care how much people give me shit for it, I just ignore them. What changes is the world but we have to change with it. I'm not one of those guys who talks about 'the glory days' of metal – we're living them right now!"

Do you have any more side-projects in mind for the future?
Eddie Cross, email
"I have a couple of things I'd like to do. I'd like to do a thing with my kids only, they're both really good musicians and we could be a killer power trio like Rush-meets-Venom! Ha ha! That's one idea that would be cool. I love the idea of doing a really, really heavy project, something that's completely on the extreme side of metal with some crazy extreme guys that's heavy as fuck. I've also had an idea for 20 years to do a full-on dub record from Jamaica, get people like Adrian Sherwood involved, Ghetto Priest and some cool dub guys. I don't care if nobody buys it."

Soulfly: keeping Max busy until he does his dub record

Pizza or burger?
Andrew Stewart, email
"It's a good question! We eat pizza every night after shows so I'm gonna go with burger. Especially if it's In-N-Out Burger like we have in The States."

We had a Return To Roots. It was amazing. When are we getting a Return To Chaos A.D.?
Shannon Nearl, email
"We're doing *Beneath The Remains* mixed with *Arise* in South America and Russia, we'll see how that goes. *Chaos* is one of my favourite records, so I'd love to play the entire record, it'd be amazing. It's the most diverse, good songwriting, recorded in a castle, it was fantastic."

What's the craziest gig you've played?
Jenny McAlpine, Facebook
"One of them has to be last year in Poland at Pol'and'Rock [with Soulfly]. There was 500,000 people and it was my birthday, so it was all kinds of things, like them singing *Happy Birthday* in Polish. The promoter gave me a special t-shirt with my birthday on the back. That show, coupled with opening for Black Sabbath in Hyde Park in 2014, because you can't touch that. I was in awe. Jimmy Page was walking around – I must've died and gone to heaven!"

What is your favourite non-metal album to date?
Rae Lovell, Facebook
"I have to go with Dead Can Dance – *Spiritchaser*; it's by far my favourite ▶

SOULFLY: PRESS/CHAR TUPPER

Max Cavalera:
49 going on 15

Buy this man a beer – we need more Max adventures!

really non-metal record, I listen to it all the time. It's a great, moody record. Really weird, tribal sounds. Lisa [Gerrard], the singer, has an amazing voice. That's a fantastic record."

After decades of touring, how do you maintain your drive?
Alex James Beau Adamson, Facebook
"Don't grow up. Don't give in. Try not to let the politics of music get you down because they can get you down sometimes. I think the purity of the passion for music itself is the best, and what I get every night from the crowd is utterly amazing, it's like a drug. I still get nervous before shows. Having the best show is the best feeling and having the worst show is the worst."

With the world being in such a state of confusion and decline, where do you see your lyrical direction going for future material?
Brian Maloney, email
"The more screwed up the world gets, the better the music gets, unfortunately. If we keep electing people like Trump and these crazy guys that are brainwashing thousands of people and fucking the world up, we'll keep writing protest songs and controversial songs. There's a song on the new Soulfly record, *Blood On The Street*, that's about police brutality. It's a true story about a Navajo Indian girl who was murdered by police and nothing happened to the policeman. It's a crazy story."

Will you please get Nailbomb back for another album?
Huw Thomas Eggington, Facebook
"I hope. I wish. I wish I could convince Alex [Newport] to do another one, but I don't think it's gonna happen. Alex is very hardheaded. We got the live shows, which is great, I hope we can bring that to Europe. As far as new music I have to go with the other projects."

Do you feel any anxiety about your future now that metal isn't as 'fashionable' as it once was?
John McPartland, Facebook
"I think we survived the worst. We survived disco, we survived grunge, which were the most threatening times for metal. I think grunge was the worst time for metal, which was right around *Chaos A.D.* Grunge was all people wanted to know about; metal wasn't cool any more. If we can survive that, we can survive anything. We're tough. We're hard to kill. You can survive anything and then puke on Eddie Vedder, just to make a clear statement! Ha ha ha!"

Have you got plans to write another book? I loved your first one!
Rachel Branson, email
"I've got to collect more adventures, I've got to do more shit. Nowadays it's a little slower because I'm not drinking anymore, so the adventures are less trouble. Maybe I should go back to drinking to see if I can get more adventurous shit going on. There's an idea about just tour stories. We may do that and that goes back to all the old Sepultura stories. There's a lot of stuff I didn't put in my book that I can put in a tour stories book, that's something I'd like to read as a fan of any musician. I bet Ozzy has thousands of great stories. I have a few that people haven't heard."

What skill that one of your bandmates has do you wish you had?
Emma Vaughan, email
"I always wanted to be a drummer. My son plays drums amazingly, so I get jealous of that. He does something really unique that I've not seen with any drummer; he doesn't play the same beat every night on different parts of songs, he changes every day, which is *fuckin* freaky. I don't know how he does it. It freaks me out every night. Any night I can expect something different out of him."

How will you celebrate your 50th birthday?
Kieron Mulherne, Facebook
"The plan was to go to Nicaragua because the President's son is a fan, but the rebels are taking over Nicaragua now. It's fucked up. My birthday celebrations are on hold, I've gotta see what happens. Otherwise I'll have to play a gig. My 49th was at Pol'and'Rock, I wouldn't mind doing that again. Next time I could be on tour at a big festival. I'll book it just for that."

Do you believe any conspiracy theories at all?
Sam Reese, email
"Yeah, yeah. The JFK assassination through to the Trump presidency to stuff like Hitler being fascinated with religious artefacts and trying to find the holy spear… there's a lot of crazy shit in the world, so I do believe some. UFOs, I don't know if I buy 100% into that, but I do believe there's a lot of crazy shit in the world that we don't even know about, but it's happening." H

THE LATEST SOULFLY ALBUM, *RITUAL*, IS OUT NOW VIA NUCLEAR BLAST. SOULFLY PLAY BLOODSTOCK IN AUGUST

PRESS/HANNAH VERBEUREN

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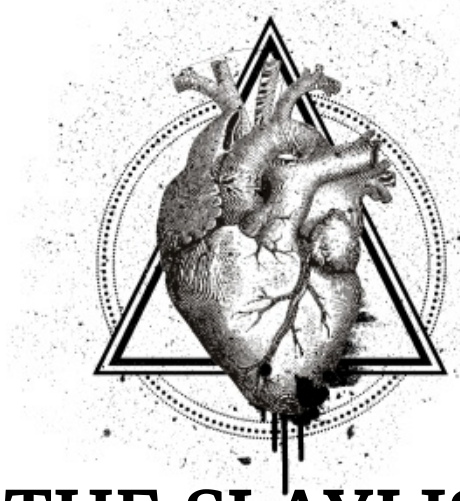

THE SLAYLIST

ZEAL & ARDOR

The man born Manuel Gagneux only has time for the heaviest and most succinct anthems.

WORDS: MATT MILLS

Manuel Gagneux: blame it all on Maiden. Seems fair

LISTEN NOW
Head to www.tinyurl.com/ZealSlaylist to listen to Manuel's Slayist

"*THE TROOPER* WAS pretty much the first metal song I heard. I think I was 11 years old and I was involved with the punk scene a lot. I thought punk was the most radical music out there and then comes my friend with a MiniDisc player – because that was a thing – to show me **IRON MAIDEN**. I was infatuated immediately. It was a rush of adrenaline! I remember that intro lick and thinking the harmonies were the bee's knees. Then, when I was 14, a drum player friend of mine said to me, 'I heard you like metal music – but you're not listening to the *correct* metal music.' He showed me *Hammer Smashed Face* by **CANNIBAL CORPSE** and I understood why. It's relentless; there's no compromise. The intro, it's simply, 'How many notes can we fit into this femtosecond?' It's great!

From ages 14 to 18, **SYSTEM OF A DOWN** were the band I listened to most. There's something about their use of contrast in songs like *Chop Suey!* that really makes all those hard moments just slam harder. That's definitely something I stole from them for Zeal & Ardor. And there's also just a playfulness to the music they make that I adore. They don't take themselves too seriously and I think that that's the key to making other people take you seriously. *The Wizard* is another one of those more playful songs. I just enjoyed the jammy atmosphere that it created, which is something that **BLACK SABBATH** were just unparalleled at. It really takes you somewhere. I got hooked on that back in Limewire times; my computer was absolutely wrecked after downloading it. Ha ha ha! It was worth it, though, and I could always blame it on my brother.

Once I was fresh out of school and the military, I actually went away from harsher music. I just wanted to mentally chill. There was a macho 'bro-ness', especially in the military, and I just wanted to distance myself from that.

"BLACK SABBATH WRECKED MY COMPUTER"

I listened to classical music and jazz and a lot of snooty things, and then I heard *Laid To Rest*. It dawned on me, 'Actually, this is what I really like.' **LAMB OF GOD** don't get much credit for it, but they really did reinvigorate groove metal. **DILLINGER ESCAPE PLAN** deserve more credit, too. Meshuggah get the crown for starting djent, but I think it was *When Acting As A Wave*: that short, little, one-minute track. It's so groovy and so oddball, but it absolutely destroys. That kind of song sticks with you and I don't think anyone could ever intentionally recreate that.

I don't know how I ended up getting in contact with **SEPULTURA**, but I remember buying the *Under A Pale Grey Sky* live album. The version of *Roots Bloody Roots* on there is twice as fast and hard as the album version. They just rush through it! I'm biased because that's the first version I heard and I heard the studio version far later; it was very disappointing. I guess I have a really short attention span and get bored really quickly, because I also love *Stabwound* by **NECROPHAGIST**. It's very to-the-point and excellently mixed and compressed. It feels like a stab-wound and it's just really fucking good. It's one of the few classic metal tracks that I still listen to on a day-to-day basis. I haven't 'outgrown' it yet.

HOT HEAD SHOW are a band from London, I think, and they're ridiculously good. Songs like *Bummer* aren't metal but there are so many influences in there at once. It's very tongue-in-cheek rock and you can hear that everyone in the band spent at least some of their time in some musical education. On the other end of the spectrum, you can't really explain why *Raining Blood* is great; you just have to listen to it! Everyone that's ever even heard of **SLAYER** will agree. It's just fucking *Raining Blood*! The first time I heard that song, the intro was so long that I thought I was being fucked with. But, when that riff kicked in, I was hooked. It's iconic. People are still trying to recreate that; it's as brilliant as it is sad." H

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LIFE LESSONS

ASH COSTELLO

She's learned some hard lessons fronting Cali goth rockers New Years Day. She's also picked up a surprising role model

WORDS: ALI COOPER

IN PURSUIT OF their long-awaited follow-up to 2015 album, *Malevolence*, New Years Day scrapped an entire album and started again from scratch. With the secrets of their fourth effort stored neatly under her half-black, half-red barnet, we caught up with frontlady Ash Costello to discuss the struggles of the MySpace era, the benefits of being an eternal optimist writing angry songs, becoming a role model to a passionate young generation and how a chance meeting with hair dye created one of modern metal's most iconic looks.

SOCIAL MEDIA OPENED UP MY WORLD

"It's so strange to think how much the music industry has changed since the MySpace days, but I was around even before social media came in. I was printing flyers and standing outside venues advertising to people from that area, there wasn't a way to advertise to people across the world like there is now. The only thing more helpful than social media to artists is the home studio experience; since Pro Tools became accessible to everybody, anybody can make a demo or album in their bedroom."

NEVER HAVE REGRETS

"In 2008-2009, New Years Day got shelved by a now-bankrupt record label and we didn't even own our name so we couldn't do anything for two years. That was really depressing but would I go back and warn myself not to sign to that record label? No way: everything happened exactly as it should. I'm a big hippy at heart; I'd rather let the universe point me in the direction, that's how I've always lived my life and it's worked out for me. I feel like I walk amongst my peers my age and at the same level as New Years Day and I feel like I know so much more than them. I've been in a band since I was 14, I've seen and been through it all, so a lot of people come to me for help, but at the same time I know I still have so much to learn."

KEEP YOUR EYES ON THE PRIZE

"I read somewhere that if you want to make it, you have to be obsessed with your craft, which I really am. I live this scene – it's all I think about. Every day, I think about what's going on in the scene around me and in other scenes outside of mine. I'm watching everything 24 hours a day. I make it a point to learn as much as possible every day."

SISTERS ARE DOING IT FOR THEMSELVES

"I can see how hard it is for bands to put butts on seats and sell tickets to shows, not a lot of bands can do that. So for only a three-band bill of three women selling out arenas one after another like it's nothing, I know enough to know that's a big deal. Our tour with Halestorm and In This Moment isn't even finished yet – we have the UK and Europe left to go – but I never want it to end. To the credit of Lzzy Hale and Halestorm, though, they don't need In This Moment and New Years Day to do that. They could do it just fine on their own."

SHARING IS CARING

"Our label president came to our hotel room and saw all of our makeup and he goes, 'Is this for both you guys?' And Nikki [Misery, guitar] went, 'Yeah, we share both our makeup.' And they all ended up talking about how women's makeup is better anyway. I've taught Nikki how to do his makeup – when we met, it was ghastly. He was using his fingers to put on eyeliner, I had to show him that there was an actual pencil and/or a brush to do that! He's got really good now though, I don't have to look over his shoulder anymore."

"THIS ISN'T WHAT MARILYN MANSON WOULD DO!"

ALWAYS BE YOURSELF… OR BE MARILYN MANSON

"There's a combination of front-people who, if they didn't exist, without a doubt I would not be who I am, and Marilyn Manson is absolutely one of them. Both artistically, in his personality and his overall worldview, too, obviously his music is part of it but it's more his intellect that inspired me. He's intelligent and very well-spoken, very to-the-point and there's no bullshit there. I've tried to not give a fuck like he does, but sometimes I fall off the wagon and I lash out at someone online who says something stupid. I have to remind myself, 'This isn't what Marilyn Manson would do, reel it in!'"

GWEN STEFANI IS AN UNDERRATED IDOL

"Gwen Stefani has been a huge influence in my life since I was 10 years old, she's the perfect mix of masculine and feminine. When she gets onstage, she's incredibly powerful like one of the guys, but she's not overly masculine, she's still very cute and feminine. I don't think she gets enough credit for mixing the two so flawlessly, especially when we all look back on her work. People accept her and move on but they don't stop to think that what she does must have been very difficult."

THE BEST FASHION STATEMENTS ARE ACCIDENTS

"I didn't expect the popular response to my hair. A lot of people think it was calculated but that's giving me way too much marketing and branding credit. It happened a long time ago, way before I started taking social marketing classes. I've dyed my hair since I was 10 and I've tried every colour combination and style you can think of. I just happened to do this one day around the time my band started taking off and people really liked it, so I kept it. I wish I could say there was a drawn-out thought process but there really wasn't. What's crazy is there are wigs out there that have definitely ripped off a photo of me on their packaging and people come to our shows wearing those wigs!"

BEING A ROLE MODEL IS TOUGH

"I feel a lot of pressure to be a good role model but I'm very vocal that I'm an accidental role model. I didn't ask to be one but I'll do my best with the position and the importance of it. I try to use my voice for good as much as I can. My favourite thing we did on Warped Tour was when I had

PRESS

Ash didn't ask to be a role model, but she's doing a damn fine job of it just the same

Ash has been burned, but she keeps rising like a two-toned phoenix

a class every day that 50–100 kids could sign up for, and I would talk to them about their issues and how much I understand the pressure they're going through. Being a kid today with social media, I can't imagine the pressure they're under every day. We never had that as kids and it's fucking them up. At this time depression, self-harm and suicide is at a high rate, and I think that definitely correlates to the influence of social media."

LIFE GOES ON

"I've been on Warped Tour seven times over 10 years, the most any female musician has been on Warped. It's a huge part of my life and that's a whole decade to me, it's one of the things that inspired me to pursue music and give my band a chance. Without it, I think it's going to be very hard for smaller bands to get traction and exposure but, as a music listener and lover, I know things move on. Look at all the tours over the years that were so important and TV shows that were so important to exposing bands on a mass level; they have all come and gone but music has been just fine."

"I GOT RIPPED OFF BY THREE DOZEN COMPANIES"

PICK YOURSELF UP, DUST YOURSELF OFF

"My clothing brand Bat Royalty was one of the shittiest lessons in my life. Explaining it in terms of music: my bat boots, that have been copied by three dozen companies now, were the equivalent of writing a No.1 song. Imagine you've been in a band for a long time, you've written a song that's gone to No.1, and the label rips it all out from underneath you as soon as you've finally made it. They take away the money you made for it and your rights to it, they take its chance of success afterwards. It was a very successful company but because of a lawsuit over my product, you can lose that success as quickly as you gained it."

TRUST NOBODY

"Like most things, I give no fucks. I'm doing everything I can to not lose that momentum and find another company to manufacture my clothing line with. I feel so burned by that experience. I have business partner baggage now, I'm too afraid to partner with anybody. My band started gaining so much attention in the last two years and we've become so busy, so now it's really hard because I can't find someone to man it for me while I'm travelling. I'm gonna figure it out when it's meant to happen and it'll be even better than it was before. Recently, I've learned a lot of lessons about business because I was more artistically minded than business-minded and my outlook on business was to trust people and assume they've got me, which definitely isn't right. I've learned to be less trusting and stand up for myself."

DON'T LOOK BACK IN ANGER

"I'm gifted in a way because I know quite a few people who deal with shitty people and shitty experiences and it shows through their negativity, but I'm not like that. I think, 'Yeah that sucks, but look at how gorgeous it is outside, look how gorgeous I look today!' I can't be mad, I'll give myself time to be upset and then move the fuck on because it's not that bad. You can't tell that to someone who doesn't have that mentality, though, they'll never get it. Maybe I'm still so bouncy and bubbly because I have an outlet for aggression with my music and I really get to let that out. Lyrically, it's obvious that I get upset pretty easily but it's very therapeutic to write songs about it."

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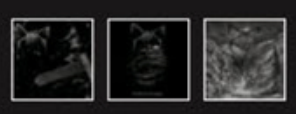

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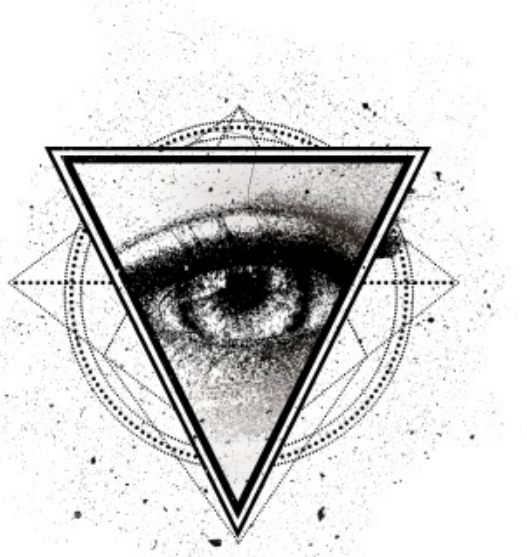

IN THE STUDIO

1349

The Norwegian black metallers have a new album five years in the making – but what's got them feeling playful?

WORDS: CHERYL CARTER

1349: progressive and playful...

THE BLACK METAL world has shifted many times in the five years since 1349 released *Massive Cauldron Of Chaos*. For these Norwegians, that time has been spent exploring the darkness, and, after being commissioned by governmental organisation Innovasjon Norge to create a piece of music based on an Edvard Munch painting, 1349 have found a way to traverse those shadows even further. We spoke to guitarist Archaon to find out more.

You're recording in *two* studios this time, and with the same producer as *Massive Cauldron Of Chaos*. Why is this?
"It's done for practical reasons. We didn't have so much time as [drummer] Frost is going to Mexico with Satyricon so we were in a hurry to get stuff done. We had to look for an available studio, and this one's in the middle of Oslo next to our rehearsal space so it was easy. We recorded the drums for all tracks and the guitars for six out of eight tracks in that studio. And then we went on to the studio where we have always recorded, apart from our first album *Liberation*, which is Studio Nyhagen. The producer, Jarrett Pritchard, has been our regular sound engineer since 2008 in America. We go a long way back and we know he's got a broader, wider experience and understanding of what 1349 are doing."

What can we expect? Do you have a title?
"It's a very demanding and hard-hitting album. It's got a lot of elements that you might expect, some parallels to our legacy, but at the same time it's kind of a daredevil of an album. We are doing a bit of a progressive approach to it and applying, to a certain extent, a 'playful vibe'. We're allowing ourselves to experiment. You always have people say, 'Oh, you should be doing this,' or 'You should be doing that and sticking to your formula.' That's not what 1349 are about at all. We never wanted that; we never pursued a formula to use forever. So far, we only have working titles. Ideas have been thrown around but we haven't got one name nailed. Songs were ready and they're powerful, they are spanning a wide spectrum, but they are definitely in the fashion that 1349 fans will be interested in, that's something I know for sure. It's very much 1349 in 2019: a natural evolution. We are looking to release a single towards the end of year and the album will be out in the latter part of the year."

THE FACTS

ALBUM:
7

PRODUCER:
Jarrett Pritchard

STUDIO:
Amper Tone Studio and Studio Studio Nyhagen, Norway

EXPECT:
The darker side of 1349 to come to the fore in more experimental ways than we've heard from them before

Earlier in the year you released the commissioned single for the Munch Museum, *Dødskamp*. Did that process give you ideas for new directions?
"It was a new experience, for sure. We were asked by the Munch Museum and Innovasjon Norge to choose a Munch painting and compose a song based on it. After some discussion we chose the Dødskamp painting. It translates to 'death struggle' and the image has so much emotion, darkness and death. It was justifiable to choose it because it was so obviously the one that we have connections to with our black metal perspective and that gave us the possibility to approach songwriting in a different way. It was totally up to us to do what we wanted; we had complete artistic freedom. It's really a preview of the album, to show what's to come, and it was also a nice way to come back after a little hiatus."

Do you pay attention to the current extreme/black metal scene?
"The latter is what applies to all of us, I'd say. Not because we are stuck in a rut – it's about the time you have and what you chose to listen to. There's so much interesting music put out and every now and then you'll stumble across good bands, but it's not like you're nerding out as much as you did back in the day. I used to follow everything in the metal scene and I keep an eye out to a certain extent, but there's a *lot* of music out there. We are mainly concerned about doing our own thing, not because we are egocentric but, and I believe most bands do this, to preserve our own nature and ideas as a band. You have to focus on your own art and give that your 100% attention." H

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THE STORY BEHIND

LAID TO REST LAMB OF GOD

The song that gave Lamb Of God a breakthrough single and a spot on *Guitar Hero*. Just don't ask them about that last bit...

WORDS: STEPHEN HILL

AT THE START of the millennium, metal was changing shape. The nu metal era was about to be put out of its misery, and the rise of more traditional-sounding metal was starting to form in the underground. "There was a real feeling of camaraderie between a lot of bands from that era," says Lamb Of God vocalist Randy Blythe of the time. "We didn't necessarily sound like them, but we had all come through the punk scene and were playing metal. I guess you'd call it the start of metalcore. So it was a really cool community."

"We went out on the Headbangers Ball tour in 2003," guitarist Mark Morton remembers. "It was us, Killswitch Engage, Unearth, Shadows Fall and God Forbid. We would even swap the bill around every night, because at that point all of us were in very similar positions in our career; there was no real stand-out 'huge' band. It felt like we were all coming up together. There was the sense that something was happening, which was exciting."

What was happening was bigger than even the band themselves realised. With two albums under their belt and an ever-swelling fanbase, major labels began to circle around Lamb Of God and the scene around them, leading to the Virginians signing to Epic ahead of their imminent third record – to their own surprise.

"We all had day jobs; we'd go off on tour and come back and have to work in construction or whatever," Randy chuckles. "We decided that if we were going to take the band seriously then we needed to be able to really commit to it. There aren't many jobs that will go, 'Sure, take six months off and your job will be waiting for you when you get back.' So, we decided to go with Epic because the advance meant we could all quit our jobs. But the punk rocker in me did feel pretty weird about it. I was suspicious because it was so far away from where I came from. I thought we'd follow the Sex Pistols model – one album and out. We were this disgusting-sounding metal band, I never thought that it could last."

"I remember feeling an immense amount of pressure when we went to write and record *Ashes Of The Wake*," adds Mark, "because it was this new chapter for our career. And it's not enough to just do as well as you had done before on records like this; you can't stand still, you have to surpass your previous material."

THE FACTS

RELEASED:
2004

ALBUM:
Ashes Of The Wake

PERSONNEL:
Randy Blythe (vocals), Mark Morton (guitar), Willie Adler (guitar), John Campbell (bass), Chris Adler (drums)

HIGHEST CHART POSITION:
N/A

THE SONG THAT came to define the new Lamb Of God era, and open *Ashes Of The Wake*, was the monstrous *Laid To Rest* – a song that was built on Mark's new approach to songwriting at the time.

"I came in with the opening riff and it just built from there," Mark tells us. "But, in my head, I knew we had to try and do something that we hadn't done before. So that's when I started to experiment with melody. I thought that if we could have Randy do these really brutal vocals there was a way that you could infuse the guitar parts with a sense of melody. That's really why that song works: it's still as brutal as our older stuff, but it was catchy as well."

Randy, though, credits the lyrics, written by Mark, as one of the main reasons that the song struck a chord with metal fans so quickly.

"If you look at any of the really big Lamb Of God songs, the lyrics are usually written by Mark Morton," he says. "And I'll tell you why: he loves to stick a curse word in there! So, *Laid To Rest* has got a big *'Say who gives a FUCK!'* *Redneck* is *'a MOTHERFUCKING invitation'* and there's *'Walk with me in HELL.'* Metal fans love to scream a curse word! I've lost count of the amount of people that have come up and screamed that in my face. It's like, 'Dude, I'm doing my grocery shopping.' and they're shouting *'Who gives a fuck!'* at me. I just want to say, for the record, I'm not giving you a motherfucking invitation to anything, Mark Morton is. So, go shout it at him!"

Despite its irresistible melody, stomping groove and quotable, profanity-ridden chorus, *Laid To Rest* wasn't initially a song that jumped out at either Mark or Randy as the hallmark anthem it has become over the years.

Lamb Of God (left to right): Willie Adler, John Campbell, Mark Morton, Chris Adler, Randy Blythe

GETTY

"Is it the first song on the album?" Randy asks. "I genuinely can't remember the track listing off the top of my head. I don't really remember it particularly standing out from the other songs we were writing at the time."

"You write a bunch of songs and that was just one of them," Mark concurs. "In fact, I actually wanted *Hourglass* to open the album. I have to say that I've conceded that I got that one wrong now."

Mark also believes that, as much as *Laid To Rest* represented the start of something new for the band, it was the end of something as well. Namely, their more overtly political lyrical content.

"It was the time of war and the Bush administration," he says. "I think a lot of the themes that we covered on that record are still relevant today. I'm not sure they ever went away really but, actually, *Laid To Rest* is really a song about some personal stuff that I was going through at the time. It was cloaked in a lot of metaphor, so there's a duality to it, meaning people could interpret it to be about what was happening in the world at the time. It was quite soon after that Randy and I had a conversation where we decided that it would be the way for us to go: more personal and introspective. So, this is the time when we stepped off our soapbox, essentially."

"I'M DOING MY GROCERY SHOPPING AND FANS ARE SHOUTING AT ME"
RANDY BLYTHE

ASHES OF THE *Wake* was released on August 31, 2004 and, with *Laid To Rest* as its opening track and lead single, turned Lamb Of God from underground heroes to true modern metal heavyweights. To this day it remains their biggest-selling album, with *Laid To Rest* still their most well-known single, racking up more than 43 million streams on Spotify.

"We were doing the Ozzfest in 2004 when the album was actually released, I believe," Randy says. "We were one of three non-rotating bands on the second stage along with Slipknot and Hatebreed. We were going out in front of crowds of tens of thousands of people all of a sudden, and they all knew the words to this song, and they were going crazy. It was certainly an odd feeling; when I joined the band, I just wanted to play [iconic New York club] CBGB's. That was the height of my ambition, so this was a really unusual feeling."

Flip-flops are metal. Don't let anyone tell you otherwise

GETTY

"THE *GUITAR HERO* VERSION SOUNDED *TERRIBLE*"

RANDY BLYTHE

Like many rock and metal acts of the time, the song was given a huge commercial shot in the arm due to its inclusion in the immensely popular *Guitar Hero* game series. Although it was a boost for record sales, Randy wasn't entirely happy with the song's inclusion.

"We went to Australia and had this amazing tour," He begins. "And one day we get invited down to our label's Australian offices to play the new *Guitar Hero*, because *Laid To Rest* was on it. We all thought that was pretty cool, so we head down there and put the song on, and I'm playing away… then the vocals come in. And I was like, 'Did they get the wrong song? Is this an outtake from the studio when I was drunk?' it sounded terrible! Turns out they had got a band to cover it to save on royalties, and the band sounded like Lamb Of God, but the vocalist was horrible! I was like, 'Dude! You should have called me and I'd have come down and recorded it for $100!' It's pretty ironic that so many people were turned on to our band by hearing that version of our song… and it isn't even us."

Regardless, the true version has more than stood the test of time. *Laid To Rest* has become a staple of the Lamb Of God back catalogue and one of the songs that has come to define a very specific period in their illustrious career.

"I don't know if it defines us," shrugs Randy. "But I know we still play it at every show. It moves around the setlist a lot, but it always gets played."

"I can't see us ever dropping it from the set," Mark adds. "I think people would be really bummed out if we did. It was a huge moment for us as a band: our first song on our first major label album. There are a few songs that we've written from back then where you go, 'Hmm, yeah, it's fine' but it hasn't really stood up to what we're doing now. I think we've continued to improve as a band, but that song still holds its own alongside the best of what we do now."

We're sure most heavy metal fans would agree with him. Fifteen years on from first hearing *Laid To Rest*, we still give a fuck.

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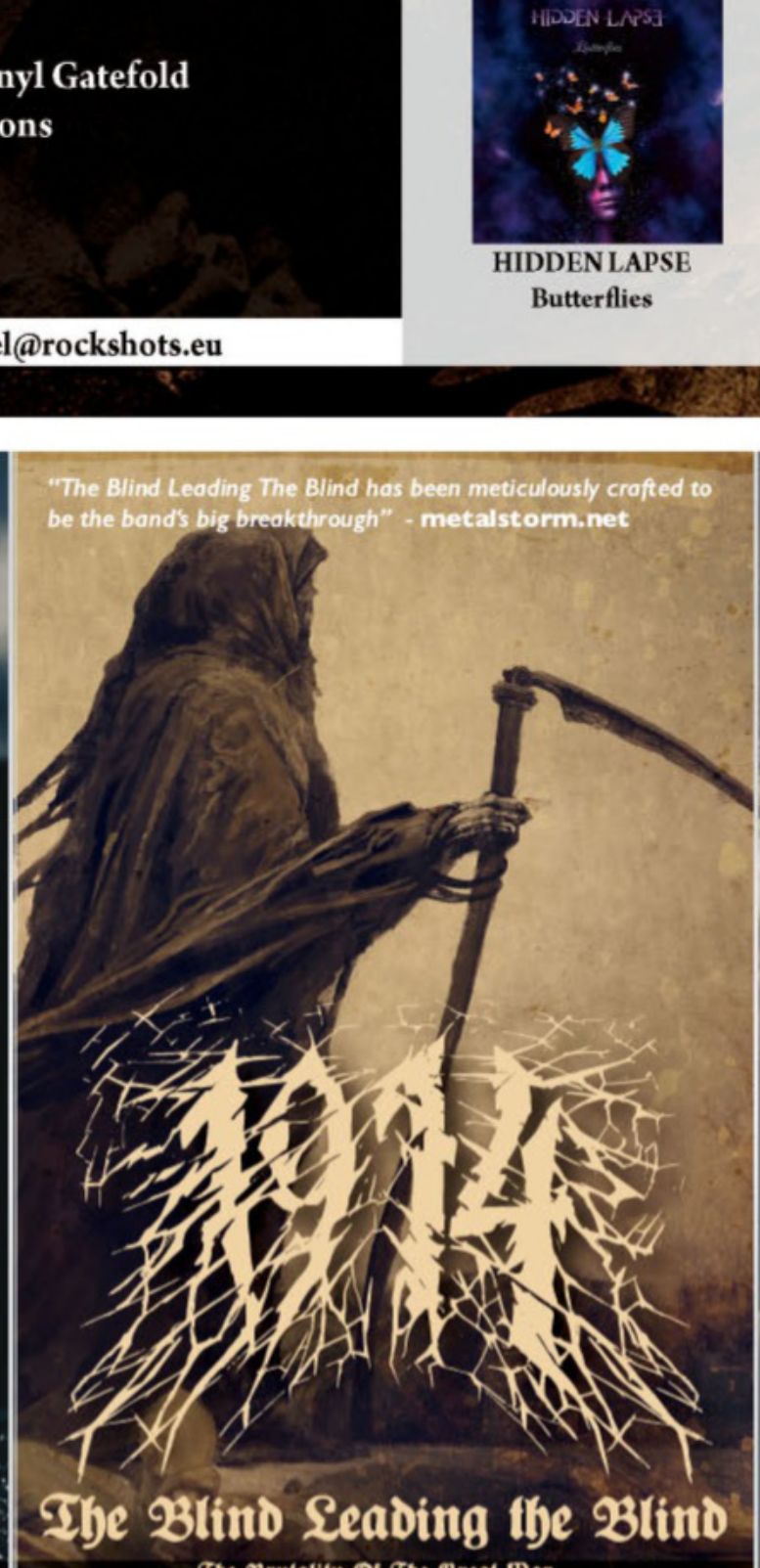

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YOUR SHOUT

“I NEED MORE BUMHOLES”

Tell Derrick and co you’re not a fan of their recent stuff... go on, we’ll wait

…and more cutting insights from our lovely readers.

NOW THAT’S WHAT I CALL TIMING

Can we have another 90s issue? That was one of my favourite *Metal Hammer*s ever. And yes I know that makes me sound boring and nostalgic, but I am boring and nostalgic, so there.
Terry Campbell, email

Have we saved this question for months until we knew we were doing another 90s-themed issue so it looks like we’ve perfectly timed a request from one of our loyal readers? Yes. Yes, we have. Here you go, Terry. Lap it up, son.

TANKS FOR THE THOUGHT

Loved the Amon Amarth interview, but isn’t it time Sabaton got a *Metal Hammer* cover again? Vikings are metal, but so are tanks, and they’ve earned it. They are even headlining Bloodstock!
Damo James, email

If you’re insinuating that any bands whose lyrical content falls vaguely into the category of History And Battles And Stuff should all be lumped together, then yes, we agree, and we’re sure we’ll be hearing from Sabaton in this magazine very soon indeed.

SEPOOTURLA

Chaos A.D. was Sepultura’s last solid album together. I’m probably the only metalhead alive who thinks *Roots* was garbage.
Matt Sollers, Facebook

Honestly, Matt, you probably are. You never know, though. Maybe start up a club for other such likeminded people. See what happens. Look, we’re not your mum, do what you want.

APRIL TOOLS

I’m going to be sat in a retirement home dribbling over myself and dementedly reciting the lyrics to *Stinkfist* before we get a new Tool album, aren’t I? I’m 32, by the way.
Jeremy Poppoff, email

The year is 3025. Humanity has been extinguished. Nuclear war has taken all of the planet save the cockroaches who’ve evolved into the new dominant lifeform. The sun is dying and the charred remains of civilisation lie in the splintered shadow of a moon long decimated by asteroids. Maynard James Keenan says the Tool album might come in April 3026.

DEATH MAGNETIC

Fridge magnets are the best gift you’ve done! Can we please have more? I need more ‘bumholes.’
Livi Olsted, email

We’ve all had days where we feel like we need more bumholes, Liv.

CHAOS REIGNS

I loved *Lords Of Chaos*. People who are mad about it look up to those mentally unstable kids as heroes rather than taking them for what they actually were. I love black metal and I loved how this film humanised them; it showed them for who they actually were, not the characters they tried to portray.
Brandon Falkenberg, Facebook

#TWEETS

I was taking a bath yesterday. My cat jumped on my phone and activated my music player by accident. I was trapped with Slayer in a bathtub. Best trap ever.
@FUXJUNGE

Nobody cares about your t-shirt collection. What are you a teenage girl on Instagram, lmaooooo
@NBA_GODFATHER_

Just when I thought I knew a great deal about one of my favourite bands, along comes the @MetalHammer 25 page @RSprachrohr special! Very insightful read, making me look forward even more to Milton Keynes in the summer – if that’s even possible.
@JM_PYE

Time for Metal Hammer to rebrand as Rock Hammer
@IMKAZAHKSTAN

Got the Louise Lemón sampler with @MetalHammer, stuck it in on in the car and had wept my eyeliner off by the time I got to work. Magnificent, totally spellbound.
@C_SIXTYFI

SEPULTURA: PRESS

Lords Of Chaos: play nice, la... actually, forget it

Yeah, *Lords Of Chaos* has certainly divided opinion. Much like the black metal scene itself when it emerged, blinking and church-burning, into the metal world. We liked it!

WHO METAL?

Am I the only one out there that grew up in the 90s that loved the sound of metal in that era, and never heard the saying 'nu metal' 'til recently?
Daniel Swanson, Facebook

Maybe? Nu metal as a 'thing' didn't really gather pace in music's wider consciousness until the later 90s. Then *Hybrid Theory* hit, a million pale imitations fell through the door and it all went tits up. We'll always have that one good Adema song, though.

HISTORY TAKERS

I loved the History Of Thrash specials you did across a few issues of *Hammer* last year. Any chance we could see something similar? Maybe a special on death or black metal, or even something a bit more obscure?
Johnathan Deerer, email

We've got a crunkcore blow-by-blow coming up over the next three issues! Just kidding, we haven't. We're up for doing another History Of... though. When will it appear? You'll have to stay tuned. We like to keep you on your toes like that.

BABY'S GOT A TEMPER

Surely this Babymetal crap has to end now? Three members, two members, no members, who actually gives a shit? I'm bored of corporate, soundalike crappy baby bands taking attention away from real metal bands. Get over it.
Doug Greengrove, Facebook

Er, Doug, we're not entirely sure we're the ones who need to get over it, mate. Breathe, buddy. It's going to be OK.

OZZ-SLOW-SIS

I feel like Ozzy is making a lot of cash grabs lately. First the bat with a removable head, now these 'Knucklebonez' figures. How about some new music?
Jason Moore, Facebook

Well, given that poor old Ozz has been laid up recently, we wouldn't count on new music any time soon. That said, who doesn't love a decapitate-able bat?!

THE BIG DEBATE

Last month, *Hammer* contributor Matt Mills wrote about the relationship between metal and politics, and why it should be celebrated, not avoided. Here's what you thought of it.

HE SAID:

"The mirror of metal's harsh political critique has turned inwards, holding its own fans to the same moral standards as the outside world – and some of us clearly can't handle it."

YOU SAY:

"Anyone who gets mad about listening to music that contains someone else's beliefs other than their own is the real 'snowflake'. No matter what side of the political spectrum it falls on."
Kaine O'Brien, Facebook

"Most bands have been political, it's just the ones that like to jump on the bandwagon when they weren't heavily involved in the first place. Napalm Death and SOAD have been political since day one."
Zack Covill, Facebook

"I'm cool with politics in metal but when it's done artistically. For example, *...And Justice For All*. It should be thought-provoking – not message-pushing."
Andres Natalino, Facebook

"Every artist is free to be political, and serious political messages with thought and heart behind them, that don't shallowly ascribe to a simple partisan view, can be powerful and essential."
Craig Wisnom, Facebook

"It doesn't matter which side you're with politically. What matters is if the music is awesome!"
Takoda Bostwick (Facebook)

JOIN THE BIG DEBATE AT FACEBOOK.COM/METALHAMMERREADERS

HAMMER STEREO

What's been blowing our office speakers

BARONESS
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MERLIN ALDERSLADE
EDITOR

3TEETH
METAWAR
"Take me to your club"
ELEANOR GOODMAN
DEPUTY EDITOR

GAAHLS WYRD
GASTIR - GHOSTS INVITED
"Gaahl's new role as metal's most versatile vocalist"
JONATHAN SELZER
REVIEWS EDITOR

3TEETH
METAWAR
"It's impossible to sit still listening to this. Need to leap around a dancefloor immediately!"
VANESSA THORPE
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THE WILDHEARTS
Renaissance Men
"Wildhearts at their best"
LOUISE BROCK
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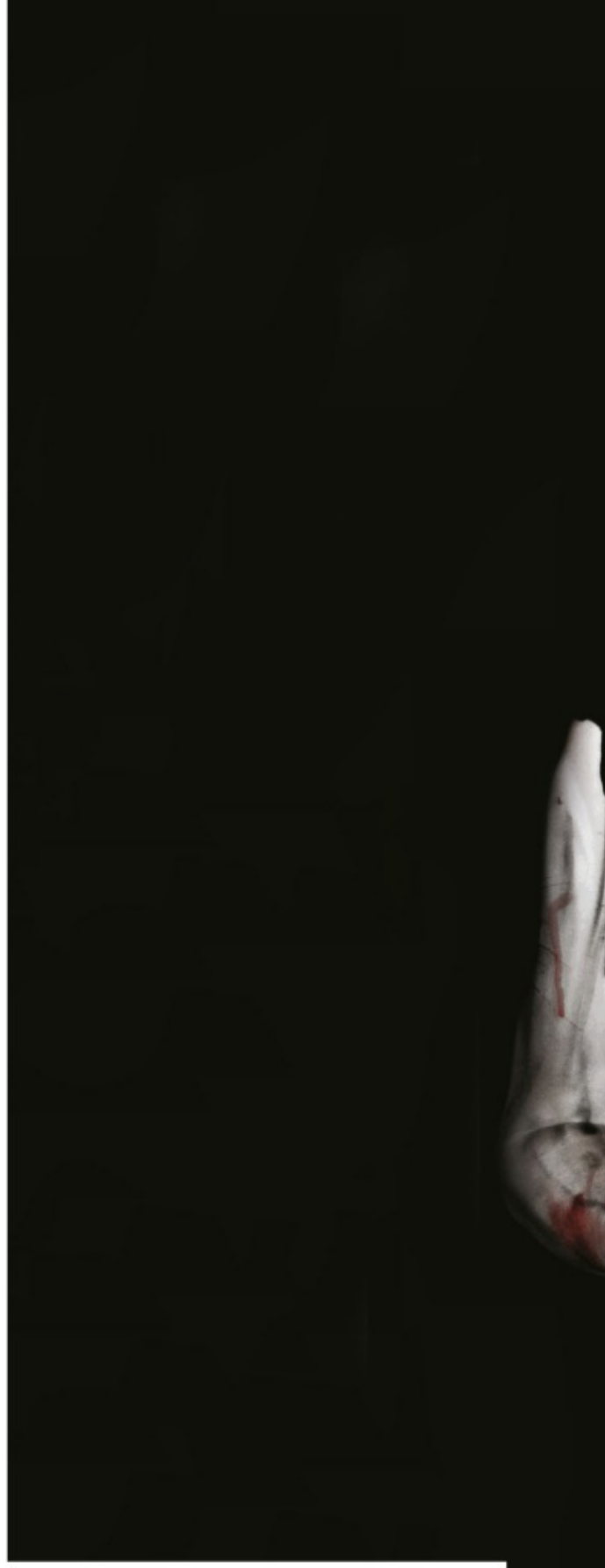
NEW NOISE

ASAGRAUM

When it comes to channelling black metal's Satanic side, you either go big or go home

WORDS: MERLIN ALDERSLADE



GROWING UP IN a small city near Rotterdam in The Netherlands, Obscura didn't find a quick route into rock music. Once the riffs finally came calling, however, she dove straight into the deep end, and hasn't looked back since.

"As a child, I wasn't much into music," admits the Asagraum frontwoman – real name Hanna van den Berg. "Except some classical music and some hard rock that my dad used to play. My first encounter with *metal* music was at the age of 12, seeing some mainstream metal videos on television. I loved the aggression and power in the music, so I dug a bit further on the internet and discovered black metal, which totally took me. So, in fact, my primary interest in heavy music started with black metal!"

Immersing herself in the sounds of the Scandinavian second-wave black metal scene and its various offshoots, Obscura found kinship with extreme metal heavyweights like Emperor, Gorgoroth, Mayhem and Watain – "for me, the late 90s and early 2000s is when black metal started to sound truly extreme and dark," she argues. She formed her first black metal band at the age of 15, though she admits today that "the skills of me and my comrades were not sufficient to make it a success… yet." Still, by 19 she was playing as a live guitarist with Dutch black metal mainstays Sammath for a stint in the mid-00s, and, after a few more years of various projects and live gigs, she eventually got to work putting together the band that would see her unleash her own vision: Asagraum.

Recruiting a line-up of international musicians she knew from around the underground, Obscura set about recording Asagraum's first EP, released in early 2017, with a debut album *Potestas Magicum Diaboli* following a few months later. The record's merging of gnarled, second-wave BM histrionics with flourishes of hypnotic, otherworldly psychedelia saw the band become one of the most hyped bands in the evolving Dutch metal scene, stealing the show at festivals across Europe from Sweden (Stockholm Slaughter) to Estonia (Howls Of Winter) to their homeland (Eindhoven's Dynamo Festival in December last year). And while Asagraum are undoubtedly doing great things musically, their – and in particular Obscura's – ideological leanings have helped them become embraced by fans looking to maintain black metal's kinship with ol' Horned Lad.

"Our ideology is Satanism," says the frontwoman, simply. "I think all living creatures are connected, and the network is a great power: Satan… though I believe He or She doesn't give a shit what name I use. I prefer 'Satan' because, despite all the different ideologies around it, this name has always stood for a rebel, an outcast, a power of liberation. And the worst thing you can do if you want to create personal freedom, power and happiness is follow the mass, like a sheep, or follow some religion that keeps you dumb and suppresses your natural instincts. I love Satan, because He is a liberation: an enemy of mass structures that keep you thinking small."

IN AN ERA where Kardashians wear Slayer shirts and the Satanic Panic of the 80s and 90s seems like a lifetime ago, such musings may seem passé by modern metal standards, but make no mistake about it: Obscura doesn't just believe every word she says, she *lives* it. And she's at pains to distance herself from the Lucifer-come-latelys using Satan's name to score kvlt points in the underground.

"I think when most people hear 'Satanism' they think it's about a dumb junkie sacrificing a rat or cutting himself in his parents' basement," she bemoans. "Unfortunately, in a lot of

IN SHORT

SOUNDS LIKE:
Nineties second wave black metal fed through a mesmerising, psychedelic haze

FOR FANS OF:
Gorgoroth, Watain, Sargeist

LISTEN TO:
Black Triangle Temple

Asagraum (Obscura centre): Satan is for life, not just for Christmas...

cases, this is true. Satan is a name I love for my own reasons. Much to my dismay, others feel drawn to this name for very different ones. People think Satanism is a religion worshipping a personal devil instead of a personal God, including rules that support doing 'evil' deeds. For me, such a thing is the same as any sheepish religion, like Christianity or Islam. It doesn't honour the name of Satan."

Hers is a philosophy that she brings to those aforementioned live shows, with the band always appearing onstage, in her words, "dressed for ritual", often covered in blood. "It connects us and the audience visually to the power of Darkness," she explains. "On stage, we all are in a trance state and that is visible; we bring an audiovisual experience of the power of Lucifer."

For Obscura, Asagraum's raison d'être is to provide an antidote to what she sees as a diluting of black metal's core values – put plainly, if you're gonna go in, you have to go *all the way* in.

"SATANISM ISN'T ABOUT DUMB JUNKIES SACRIFICING RATS"

"Many [modern] bands lack real darkness, brutality and aggression," she notes of the black metal scene today. "It is technically good but misses the *feeling* – even the big bands that were great in the past. I think it's better to split up if you run out of inspiration. And, also, there's the visual aspect; I don't feel pleased seeing a bunch of hipster students trying to play dark music on stage but ruining it with their appearance."

Having solidified a line-up she's proud of and with new album *Dawn Of Infinite Fire* readying release, Obscura is ready to take Asagraum to the next level and continue spreading their message across metal's dark underbelly. And you can bet that message won't stray far from its original purpose.

"Our ambition is being the best we can be," she concludes, before hastily adding: "to honour Lucifer!" H

THE NEW ASAGRAUM ALBUM, *DAWN OF INFINITE FIRE*, WILL BE RELEASED LATER THIS YEAR

PRESS

NEW NOISE

JUDICIARY

These visceral metallic punks are kicking back against their political environment

WORDS: DOM LAWSON

AMERICAN HARDCORE HAS a long history of political activism, but seldom has there been a more fitting time for a band like Judiciary to smash a few metaphorical windows. Roaring out of Texas with a sound that welds pitch-black metallic crunch with bursts of old-school fury, the Lubbock crew are a fiery riposte to the entrenched bigotry that they have seen all around them since childhood.

"Living in a firmly red [i.e. Republican] state and a very firmly red *region* of that state is 100% the reason Judiciary's message and worldview is what it is," states frontman Jake. "I think I can speak for all of us when I say that we were fed tons of the bullshit that is the majority opinion around here and we were expected to roll with it."

Relentlessly punishing and blazing with righteous anger, Judiciary's debut album, *Surface Noise*, is a glowing advert for the rude health of the Texas hardcore scene. As Jake admits, enlightened America's renewed battle with deeply entrenched but wholly destructive opinions has provided plenty of lyrical ammunition.

"You can see how much that influenced us and fuelled us," he says. "*Surface Noise* is thematically based on our frustrations with America and the world around us. It addresses the abhorrent nature of the racist, homophobic and bigoted people that still very largely exist in this world. Lyrically, I tried to capture how insane to me it is that these people exist and how satisfying it would be to shut them up!"

Bolstered by vocal cameos by members of Knocked Loose, Morality Rate and God's Hate (whose frontman Brody King is also a professional wrestler: "How sick is that?" notes Jake), *Surface Noise* is a brutal reminder that heavy music can and possibly *should* play its part in the pursuit of a better future. For Judiciary, the verdict is simple: don't be a dick.

"I don't know if I'd call us a necessarily 'smart' band, but I don't think it's very hard to be good people in a band that exists in a dumb world," Jake concludes. "It's not hard to *not* be a piece of shit, you know what I mean?"

IN SHORT

SOUNDS LIKE: Murderous metallic hardcore with a social conscious and balls of steel

FOR FANS OF: Integrity, Hatebreed, Ringworm

CHECK OUT: *Stronger Than Thou* (feat. Knocked Loose)

***SURFACE NOISE* IS OUT NOW VIA CLOSED CASKET ACTIVATES**

SERMON

A sombre voyage into the heart of grief and misery

WORDS: MATT MILLS

"SINCE I WAS a teenager, I've said, 'I'm gonna write an album!'," an anonymous voice echoes. The words come from the nameless mastermind of the doom metal solo project Sermon, who deliberately shrouds himself in mystery.

"I've actually written three or four albums," he continues. "They're just sat there, as demos; this is the one that actually came about."

Whoever this faceless force is, he's prolific. He states that his other, as-yet-unrealised ventures were death metal, akin to Enslaved and Opeth. Sermon, however – inspired by downtempo pop tunes and the *Dark Knight* soundtrack – is a different beast. The frontman traces its more sombre overtones to his father, who was diagnosed as terminally ill during the latter stages of writing.

"I remember my dad looked at someone in the street and asked me, 'Why do they get to live and why do I not?'," the musician recalls. "It made me start thinking about immortality."

Guided by that heart-breaking question, Sermon's debut, *Birth Of The Marvellous*, is a concept album about the Wandering Jew: an infinite nomad who discovers the curses of eternal life.

Birth Of The Marvellous's narrative reflects real-life personal tragedy, yet it still has flourishes of hope. The album's protagonist eventually finds solace in *Desiderata*: a beautifully humanist poem about being at peace with the world.

"The wanderer reads the poem and realises that that's a much better view, regardless of whether he's immortal or not," says Sermon's frontman, mirroring the escapism that he first wanted to achieve with this music.

"This was just a cathartic project to distract me and find some way to occupy my brain and deal with misery," he summarises. And for such a grassroots outing, born from strife, to escalate into one of the best metal albums of 2019 is an amazing and inspiring feat.

IN SHORT

SOUNDS LIKE: A cavalcade of bleak riffs, wrapped up in a gloomily melodic bow

FOR FANS OF: Tool, Junius, Zeal & Ardor

LISTEN TO: *The Drift*

***BIRTH OF THE MARVELLOUS* IS OUT NOW VIA PROSTHETIC**

JUDICARY: PRESS. SERMON: THOMAS ANTHONY/PRESS

CLIMATE OF FEAR

The only thing more furious than this band's members is their music

WORDS: JAMES WEAVER

IN SHORT

SOUNDS LIKE:
Death metal blends with hardcore in a focused and refined aural onslaught

FOR FANS OF:
Carcass, At The Gates, Malevolence

LISTEN TO:
From Enslavement To Extinction

WE MAY BE living in a time of social, political and environmental turmoil, but it makes for brilliant heavy metal. The aptly named Climate Of Fear embrace the current global shitstorm as their inspiration for their ferocious brand of musical devastation. Vocalist Paul Williams tells *Hammer* that this has been their intent from the start.

"When we were discussing the type of metal we wanted to write, which came very naturally, and what sort of message we wanted to say, right from day one we felt the name Climate Of Fear really rounded up everything I like to sing about," Paul says. "Ultimately, in the current times in which we are living, I feel that the longer that this goes on we're going to end up killing ourselves. Until things change, humanity will be its own worst enemy."

It's one thing having lyrics packed to the brim with rage, but Climate Of Fear have the music to back it up. Fusing the technicality of extreme metal with the brute force of hardcore, their debut album, *The Onset Of Eternal Darkness*, is as ferocious as it is exhilarating. Paul explains that their creative process is one that is a love for all things heavy. "When we started playing together we wanted to let all our own influences rub off on each other and write the best music possible. We've all played in hardcore bands, but then the first album I owned was *Vulgar Display Of Power*. We all come from a metal background; we just wanted to write the music that we love and listen to."

***THE ONSET OF ETERNAL DARKNESS* IS OUT NOW VIA DEMONS RUN AMOK**

SPLITKNUCKLE

Modern hardcore? Sometimes it's good to just do it for the kicks

WORDS: PARIS FAWCETT

IN SHORT

SOUNDS LIKE:
Beatdown hardcore made by the insane

FOR FANS OF:
Knocked Loose, Year Of the Knife, xServitudex

LISTEN TO:
Bad Taste

SCULPTING THEIR SOUND and ethics from Essex and London hardcore crews like Special Move and The EBC, Splitknuckle are yet another example of how underground DIY culture is thriving. They're Essex in both mind and music, but possess a distinct sound of their own.

"Nothing's out of the realms of possibility," reveals frontman Joey, and it only takes one listen of their 2018 beatdown EP, *Ignorance Bleeds*, to see this. Treating expectation like a rule to be broken, the lads manage to fit in a 10-minute epic, classic metal guitar solo and an acoustic opener. And the best part? It all works.

What this playful musicianship seems to stem from is a desire to jam with mates and *be* the scene they love. "We don't take anything seriously," Joey confirms, but regardless, their motivation seems to come from seeing what the bands before them managed to create.

"We discovered how individuals will put on gigs, but they will also be in bands and make labels. It was inspiring because this had all happened to bands from our doorstep," adds Joey. There's something to be said about bands simply wanting to make music with their mates; a charming reminder that modern heavy music is gonna be alright.

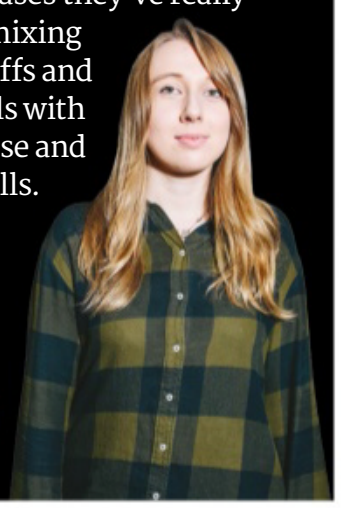
***INNOCENCE BLEEDS* IS OUT NOW VIA STAY KEEPING COUNT**

IN THE KNOW

What your favourite bands are listening to

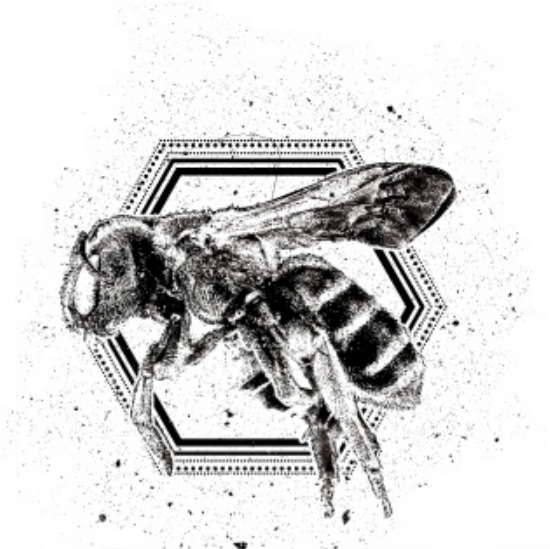
YELLOW EYES

"THEY'RE A GNARLY, New York black metal band, due a new album out this year. They breathe new life into the tried and tested black metal formulas. Over the past few releases they've really excelled at mixing unnerving riffs and grating vocals with beautiful noise and ambient swells. Primal and ethereal all at once."



JUSTINE JONES (EMPLOYED TO SERVE)

CLIMATE OF FEAR/SPLITKNUCKLE: PRESS. JUSTINE JONES: DEREK BREMNER.



HOARD ALMIGHTY

Box sets, underground oddities and all the essential merch you need this month

HEILUNG
FUTHA: COLLECTORS' BOX

SEASON OF MIST

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THE BIGGEST SENSATION to impact the metal world in recent years, Heilung are due to return on June 28 with their second journey into the heart of 'amplified history', *Futha*, and all the shamanic, transformative wonder it entails. You'd expect a band whose visual sense leaves no stone, bone, antler or animal hide unturned to come up with something spectacular for the box set, and this collectors' edition is worthy of the most devout of sacrifices. Housed in an engraved wooden box, it mirrors the respective male and female aspects of their two studio albums by coming in two versions, with men's or lady's leather Viking bracelet, along with bronze-coloured double vinyl in gatefold sleeve, a 56-page hardcover book, another 20-page book, *Futha Explained*, handcrafted pendant and Blu-ray of the *Lifa* live release, all painstakingly designed. A gift worthy of the gods!

http://tinyurl.com/futha-boxset

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https://tinyurl.com/got-roll

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http://tinyurl.com/venom-hundreds

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LOUISE LEMÓN BOX SET

£20

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http://tinyurl.com/lemon-boxset

DEVIN TOWNSEND T-SHIRT

£14.99

Heavy Devy has got a brand-new album, called *Empath*, out now. Even by his own maddening standards, it's a proper headfuck. But if, like us, you're down with Devin's unique brand of sonic terror, then let the world know with this brand-new shirt.

http://tinyurl.com/devin-tee

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£19.99

Naw! Look at the cute little… umm… Biblical beast. Okay, so it's no My Little Pony, but, come on, who wouldn't want a snuggle with this grumpy faced little mythical sweetheart on judgement day?

http://tinyurl.com/behemoth-plush

THE CONSPIRER T-SHIRT

£24

La Mort clothing make some of the coolest designs around, and this brand new The Conspirer t-shirt captures a feeling of impending doom in a beautiful gothic tableau. Which is obviously very metal.

http://tinyurl.com/conspirer-tee

GAAHLS WYRD WINE GLASSES

£30

Gaahl's love of natural wine is well known, so raise one of these new band logo-engraved glasses, pause for what seems like an eternity, and intone "Satan" in his honour. Put Merlot in it and you die.

http://tinyurl.com/gaahls-wyne

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MACHINE HEAD

NOTHING FUCKING REGRETS

When Robb Flynn made a teary announcement on Facebook Live last September, it looked like Machine Head were done. Oh, how wrong we all were...

WORDS: DOM LAWSON• PICTURES: TRAVIS SHINN

"We'd been touring for over a year. And then, as the British say, things went tits up!"

2018 was a rather eventful year in the life of Machine Head. Despite a history that's had no shortage of drama, the news that guitarist Phil Demmel and drummer Dave McClain were quitting the band took everyone by surprise. Announced by frontman Robb Flynn in a very raw and emotional Facebook Live post last September, the split occurred just before the band were to embark on a major tour in support of latest album *Catharsis*. Machine Head completed the tour, using the last dates to celebrate Phil and Dave's contribution to the band and bring that era to a close in the right spirit. Nonetheless, the future for Robb's band – now reduced to him and bassist Jared MacEachern, who joined in 2013 – looked uncertain.

"The world got to watch me get divorced on the world wide web," Robb notes with a weary chuckle. "That's the price of living your life in public. Sure, you get to share your travels around the world and all the high points, but you also get to share all the bad points, too. I didn't want to pretend it wasn't happening and then, at the end of the tour, announce that they were leaving. We've had a *painfully* honest relationship with our fans and that's been an amazing thing. It's really created an incredible bond. We've gone on this journey together and there's no way I could look myself in the eye and pretend that this didn't happen for six weeks, just to protect the fanbase. So we dealt with it and put it out there."

An already raw and emotional situation wasn't helped by an interview Phil Demmel gave to Sirius XM's Liquid Metal earlier this year, in which, among other gripes, he complained that the band had turned into Robb's solo project. Today, Robb is philosophical about the split and declines to discuss his former bandmate's comments.

"When you step back you can see that everybody was a part of this," he muses. "I don't know exactly what brought it to a head, but I know that I'd been writing new music for a while and those guys didn't want to work on stuff. So I started demoing some stuff, just so they could hear what I was writing, and then I think there might have been a conversation about the future, because we knew that that upcoming tour was the last thing that we were doing for the tour cycle. Then it went pear-shaped."

Did they make a big announcement?

"Nah, we talked. It happened over a two-day period and then that next day was when I announced it. It was tough."

The most enduring of all Machine Head line-ups played their final show in Santa Cruz on November 24, 2018. Robb remembers feeling relieved that he'd avoided crying onstage during the tour. This was the end of an era.

"There were definitely emotional moments" he adds. "But we did it. I tried to keep it classy. Every night on that tour, I got people to chant the guys' names and that's the way it should be."

Losing two bandmembers wasn't Robb's only problem in 2018. Released in January of that year, Machine Head's ninth studio album, *Catharsis*, divided opinion like nothing they'd released since *The Burning Red* in 1999. Despite having made several advance statements about the album's lengthy, experimental nature, Robb was confronted with a tsunami of online negativity, most of which seemed to focus on either his socially aware, politically charged lyrics or the album's numerous stylistic detours.

"I was America's punching bag for nine months from when the first song from *Catharsis* dropped," he recalls. "I couldn't put up a single fucking post without a hundred trolls raging at me. Being the leader of a band can be lonely. When things aren't necessarily received well, it's even lonelier."

As he points out, *Catharsis* has actually done remarkably well by contemporary sales standards and the band's subsequent tours almost sold out. However, the perception remains that *Catharsis* was, at the very least, a divisive record that infuriated as many fans as it pleased. Robb is having none of it.

"I'm proud as fuck of that record. I *knew* it was going to piss people off. Somehow it's become the mythology of *Catharsis*, 'It was a very divisive record!' Every fucking article I read! Yeah, it was divisive to white supremacists and racist pieces of shit, it was divisive to the fuckin' alt-right. But our fans loved it. People *love*

"I WAS AMERICA'S PUNCHING BAG FOR NINE MONTHS"

Logan Mader, Jared MacEachern, Robb Flynn and Chris Kontos. A fiver says not one of you saw this coming...

that fucking record. A bunch of asshole trolls who got their fuckin' panties in a bunch about it. Fuck 'em! I feel like certain groups, the press in particular, want me to apologise for that record. I ain't apologising for shit!"

He laughs, pauses, takes a deep breath and addresses the fans…

"To the extremely vocal minority that didn't like it, hey man, that's cool! I'm not mad at you. I'm grateful that anybody liked *any* moment of Machine Head. If you ever liked one song that I've written in my life, I'm unbelievably grateful. Thank you so much for enjoying something that I did. I think it's unbelievably arrogant and naïve and fucking stupid to think that everything I write is going to appeal to every single person that ever bought even one album of ours. I don't expect everybody to stay on this journey, but if you *do* stick around, it's gonna be fucking crazy because that's what life's like."

Seven months on from that Facebook Live video, Robb is not just back to his usual, ebullient self, he sounds more fired up than he has in a long time. Against the odds, things are going fucking *great* in the Machine Head camp and as happy as he is to talk about 2018's events, he'd prefer to focus on the here and now. Today he's buzzing from the response to his latest announcement: a *Burn My Eyes* 25th Anniversary tour that'll see the return of guitarist Logan Mader and drummer Chris Kontos, alongside Robb and bassist Jared MacEachern, playing the band's classic debut album front-to-back. Not only that, but these forthcoming An Evening With Machine Head gigs will also feature a 90-minute set of classics and deep cuts from all the band's post-*Burn My Eyes* albums, performed by a *new* Machine Head, for which Robb is currently auditioning guitarists and drummers. Shows in Paris, London and Dublin have already sold out and, as Robb cheerily notes, the online response to the announcement has been overwhelmingly positive. Meanwhile, he has already started recording new material, including new song *Do Or Die*: a brutal and intense response to anyone who thought Robb might be considering knocking this Machine Head thing on the, um, head.

"I wrote the music for *Do Or Die* back in August, just before everything happened," he recalls. "Two days after that announcement on Facebook Live, I was back in the studio and working on ideas and the lyrics came out while I was freestyling. I guess I was just really pissed off that day. After all the haters and all the negativity, all the bullshit and getting divorced on the worldwide web, I just fired it all back, man. It's *vicious*. I know a lot of our popular songs are very metaphorical, like *Now We Die* and *Halo*, and I love that. I love writing violent poetry, if you will. But other times I've just got to get shit off my chest. Like Jamey Jasta always says, it's ignorant-ass Oakland metal! Ha ha ha!"

For all Robb's renewed positivity, it's hard not to view recent good news through the prism of what happened less than a year ago. Phil and Dave had been an integral part of Machine Head for a long time, participating in most of the band's biggest triumphs – not least the all-conquering brilliance of 2007's *The Blackening* – and countless world

tours that further strengthened the formidable bond between Machine Head and their fans. Losing them was clearly a massive shock to the system, but while Robb admits that the split was emotionally draining, he has nothing but positive things to say about his former bandmates' contributions.

"The Beatles lasted *10 years*! Led Zeppelin? Ten years!" he bellows. "From *Kill 'Em All* to *The Black Album* was fucking *eight years*. We lasted twice that! Phil was in the band for 16 years, Dave was in the band for 23? Dude, that's fucking magic right there. Nothing lasts forever. Enjoy the fucking moment. Enjoy the ride. Now? It's a new chapter."

Did you ever contemplate the end of Machine Head and the prospect of doing something else?

I was like, 'Alright, kickass!' He stuck around and that was a great thing. He's an awesome fucking dude. He's a beast onstage. Our voices sound incredible together. It's great having him around."

When it comes to filling the other two, currently vacant positions in the traditionally four-man Machine Head, Robb is still in the early stages of working out what he needs, but he notes that auditions are going well and that everything will be in place by the time the tour kicks off in the autumn. Right now, it's unclear whether the new members will become permanent fixtures or remain hired guns, but Robb is adamant that Machine Head is not about to become a solo project. The details can be worked out later on, but Machine Head is alive and well.

Robb's not ready to get 'married' again, but he's very happy in this relationship for now

"THE LYRICS FOR OUR NEW SONG ARE *VICIOUS*. I'VE GOT TO GET SHIT OFF MY CHEST!"

"Look, I'm 51 years old and I've been doing this since I was 17. I'm pathetically unqualified to do anything else. This is it for me. I write songs. I write *Machine Head* songs. This is what I do. I'm damn fucking good at it and I'm going to keep doing it. I would've hoped that we could've worked it out with Phil and Dave, but yeah, I'm gonna keep on writing songs for Machine Head, because that's what I've got to do."

It must have been reassuring that Jared decided to stick around. Let's face it, if ever there was a moment for him to bail out, that was it…

"Totally, for sure. I think he even *did* leave on the first day!" Robb laughs. "He was like, 'I've really got to think about it…' So I wasn't sure if he was sticking around, but he called me the next morning and said, 'You know what dude? I'm gonna stay. It's awesome being here, I love it, I've wanted to make music my whole life. I want to make music with you and keep going!'

"I *love* being in a band," he avows. "I love having input from people and I love creating with people. I feel like one of my strengths is taking a bunch of good ideas and turning them into one *great* idea. So what else am I going to do? When it comes to the future and new members, I don't know, man. I just got a divorce, I'm not ready to get married again! Ha ha! I'm auditioning new guys. I'm jamming with my old guys. I'm writing new music. I'm recording new songs. I'm working on new stuff. I'm being busy, staying focused, staying positive and that's all I can do. Enjoy the fuckin' moment."

Speaking of moments, the world could well experience some major seismic disruption this October, when Machine Head take *Burn My Eyes* out on the road. Much to the excitement of old-school Head Cases, Logan Mader and Chris Kontos will be playing those classic songs live for the first time in ▶

THESE TIMES ARE VOLATILE

We chart the highs and lows of Machine Head's storied career

1991
Machine Head form in Oakland, California, while Robb Flynn is still a member of Vio-lence. Bassist Adam Duce and guitarist Logan Mader are friends of Robb's flatmate.

1993
Machine Head sign to Roadrunner on the strength of their first demo. They finish writing songs for *Burn My Eyes* and hit the studio with producer Colin Richardson (Fear Factory/Carcass).

1994
Burn My Eyes is released in August. It receives great reviews and is an instant success, particularly in the UK and Europe.

1995
After supporting Slayer across the continent, Machine Head return to the UK as all-conquering headliners. Meanwhile, drummer Chris Kontos departs and is replaced by ex-Sacred Reich man Dave McClain.

1997
Second album *The More Things Change…* is released and hits No.16 in the UK album charts.

1998
Logan Mader quits the band and is replaced by Ahrue Luster.

“I WRITE MACHINE HEAD SONGS. I’M PATHETICALLY UNQUALIFIED TO DO ANYTHING ELSE”

1999
Machine Head’s third album, *The Burning Red*, receives a mixed response thanks to Ross Robinson’s production and a sprinkling of nu metal trimmings. The album sells well regardless.

2001
Album four, *Supercharger*, is released on September 11, 2001. Yep, 9/11. Promoted by the *Crashing Around You* video, featuring collapsing skyscrapers, it didn’t stand a chance. *Bulldozer* was a fucking *slammer*, though.

2002
Ahrue Luster quits. He is eventually replaced by Robb’s former Vio-lence comrade Phil Demmel, who had previously stood in for Ahrue for a festival run.

2003
Temporarily unsigned in the US, the new-look Machine Head record fifth album *Through The Ashes Of Empires*. Released in Europe in November, it was widely hailed as a massive return to form.

2004
After securing a new deal with Roadrunner USA, *Through The Ashes…* is released in the US and Machine Head are firmly back on track.

2005
Machine Head headline Wacken Open Air for the first time, playing in front of 40,000 people. Despite the festival’s old-school reputation, the Oakland boys absolutely smash it.

2007
Machine Head release the epic and monstrous *The Blackening*, garnering a rare 10/10 review in *Hammer* in the process. Everyone seems to agree with us. The album is a colossal success as Machine Head hit the road…

2008
In the midst of their own successful touring for *The Blackening*, Machine Head support Slipknot in Australia and Europe. Robb and Adam Duce are in therapy to sort out their volatile relationship.

“I’M READY TO MAKE MOTHERFUCKERS LOSE THEIR FUCKING *MINDS*”

decades, celebrating 25 years of one of the most influential of all modern metal records. Given that Machine Head seemed to be in disarray a few months ago, this could hardly be better timed.

“We’ve been talking about it since 2015 but not everyone was into it,” Robb says. “I was talking about it with my tour manager and the guys, saying that obviously this would be a good year to do it. In light of recent events, it’s become *much* easier to do it, ha ha! Not long after I made the announcement about Phil and Dave, Logan texted me. We’ve remained friends for a while now. He’s been coming to LA Machine Head shows since 2004. When we were nominated for the Grammy [for Best Metal Performance for *Aesthetics Of Hate* in 2008], Logan was our designated driver! Ha ha ha ha! So he texted me, we ended up talking and he said, ‘It would be cool to do something around the anniversary…’ and I thought, ‘Yeah, it would!’”

The final piece of the *Burn My Eyes* puzzle is drummer Chris Kontos, who was replaced by Dave McClain back in 1995. Since then, Chris has been in countless bands but was in the midst of an extended hiatus when Robb called.

“Chris quit the music business about five years ago. He’s been doing some BMX stuff. I hadn’t even run into him in 12 years. He hadn’t played drums for about five years, so that was my biggest concern. Fuck, these songs aren’t easy, especially on the drums! But he came in to the studio and we burned through *Burn My Eyes*, and he remembered shit on some of the songs better than I did! We can’t wait to get out there. It’s going to be fucking amazing, dude.”

It also looks like it’s going to be fucking expensive, too: two line-ups, massive stage production… is your wallet screaming already?

“Oh god, yeah! Ha ha! It’s going to be a *wildly* expensive tour. We’re already losing money on the tour and I don’t fucking care. We are bringing out shit-tons of production. It’s gonna be fucking massive. I just want to blow it up and give people the fuckin’ show of a lifetime. If we make money or lose money, I don’t care. It’s going to be an amazing experience, and to me, that’s what life is all about. People should start *training* for this shit, otherwise they’re gonna get wiped out in the pit!”

2018 was an eventful but problematic year for Machine Head, but 2019 is promising to be one hell of a triumphant return. Twenty-seven years into a story that’s been anything but dull, you won’t find Robb Flynn sitting around, feeling sorry for himself. Instead, he’s ready to get up and go again. Harder than ever.

“I’m ready to just wreck these fucking crowds,” he grins. “I’m ready to make motherfuckers lose their fucking *minds*! I want people to walk away from these shows, physically and mentally exhausted to the point of ecstasy, you know what I mean? I want people to see the world differently after this thing and I think they will. It’s gonna be fucking *amazing*, dude. Let’s rage!”

2009
More squad goals achieved as Machine Head bag the main support slot for Metallica’s World Magnetic tour. James Hetfield jams with the band onstage on more than one occasion.

2011
Machine Head’s seventh album, *Unto The Locust*, is released, once again to frothing reviews and an effusive fan response. *Darkness Within* becomes an instant live favourite.

2013
Adam Duce is fired as a result of “ongoing differences” with the rest of the band. His replacement is former Sanctity frontman Jared MacEachern.

2014
Album eight, *Bloodstone & Diamonds*, is released. Meanwhile, Robb announces an end to festival shows. Instead, An Evening With Machine Head sees the band perform for up to three hours with no support band.

2016
Standalone single *Is There Anybody Out There?* Is released online and steadily becomes Machine Head’s most streamed and downloaded track ever.

2018
Ninth album *Catharsis* is released, dividing critical opinion with its eclectic blend of ideas and Robb’s spiky, socially conscious lyrics. Machine Head hit the road for more An Evening With… shows.

2018 (again)
In September, Robb announces that Phil and Dave are leaving Machine Head. The band complete the last leg of the *Catharsis* tour before going their separate ways.

2019
Robb announces the *Burn My Eyes* 25th Anniversary tour, the forging of *two* new Machine Head line-ups and the prospect of new material before the year is out. Save!

NEWS FROM INDIE RECORDINGS

KAMPFAR – Ofidians Manifest

Kampfar is out with their highly anticipated album **"Ofidians Manifest"**, an album that keeps receiving superb critics and is arguably Kampfar's darkest album to date. **"*At last Ofidian is free from its chains, and a new era can begin.*"**
– Dolk

"Winners of Norwegian Grammy award in 2015 are a law unto themselves, so expect "Ofidians Manifest" to be none the less, while excelling in both sophistication and plunging darkness."
– BattleHelm, ***5/5***

"Never ones to follow any path but their own, fans old and new can rest assured that Kampfar have realigned themselves for the best, as this new album will surely encrust another jewel in the crown of their sterling career."
– Cryptic Rock, ***5/5***

"Masterpiece!"
– Black Salvation, ***10/10***

PALEHØRSE – S/T

"These guys have a knack for writing superbly intricate melodies yet catchy, earworm choruses. The combination of alt- and prog-metal in these songs is stellar, and ranks high on my list."
– Heavy Metal HQ

POSTHUM – Like Wildfire

"this is another great sounding album from Posthum and if you are a fan of Norwegian black metal, you should check out this recording."
– Occult Black Metal Zine

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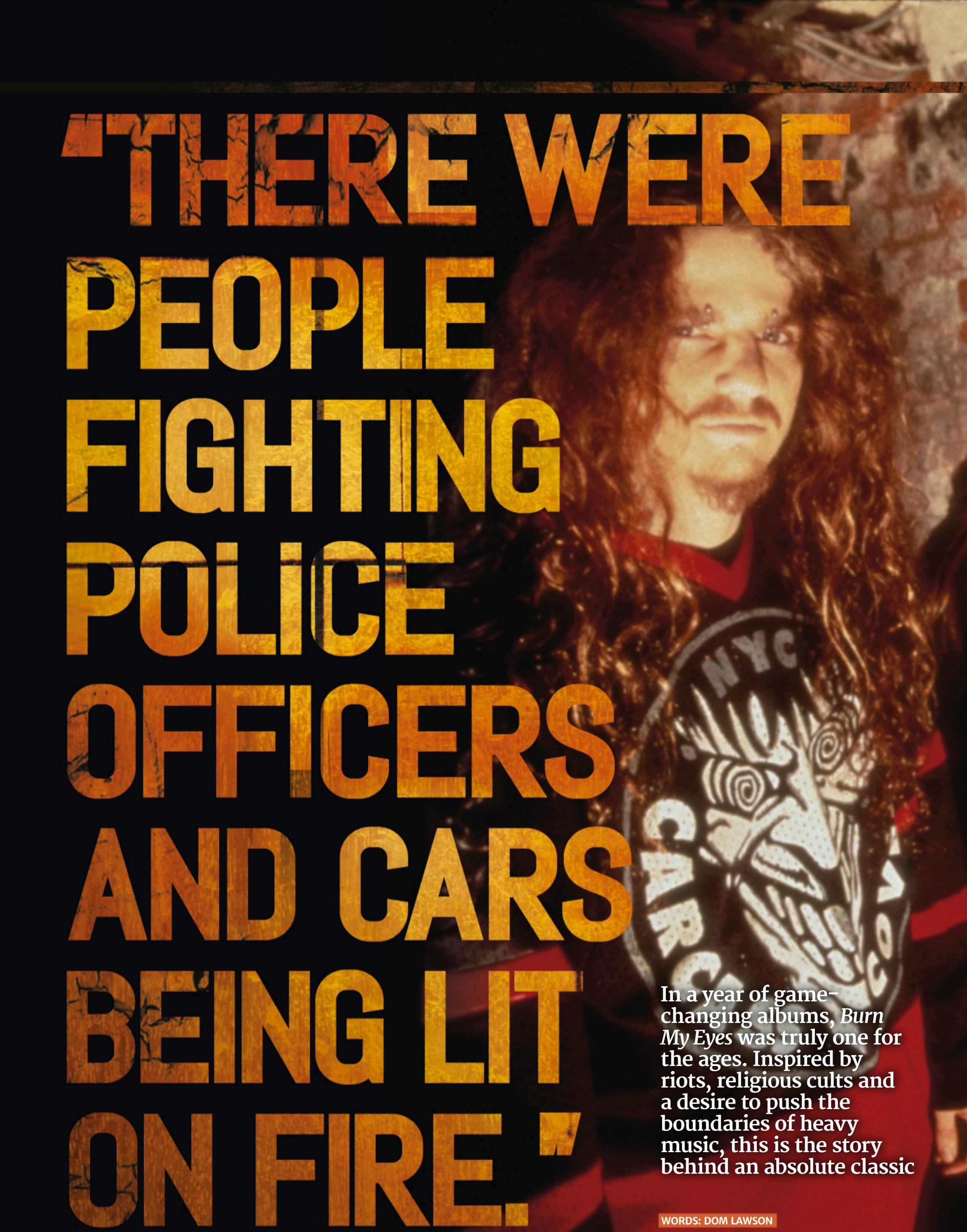
"THERE WERE PEOPLE FIGHTING POLICE OFFICERS AND CARS BEING LIT ON FIRE."



In a year of game-changing albums, *Burn My Eyes* was truly one for the ages. Inspired by riots, religious cults and a desire to push the boundaries of heavy music, this is the story behind an absolute classic

WORDS: DOM LAWSON

NYC
COVERS

Robb Flynn: Al Jourgensen's loss is very much our gain

"I rode my bike through the riots," Robb Flynn remembers, thinking back to the disorder that spread across San Francisco's streets in 1992, sparked by the riots in LA, where more than 50 people would be killed and more than 2,000 injured. The unrest had begun after the acquittal of four white police officers charged with beating black motorist Rodney King. "People were fighting police, cars were being lit on fire. Police were trying to chase me down, gang bangers were trying to chase me down, it was crazy, but I just had to feel that chaos, soak it in. I was *possessed* to be there, and a lot of that intensity came out in Machine Head."

They've become such a permanent, unquestioned fixture in the metal world that it's easy to forget the monstrous impact of Machine Head's first album, *Burn My Eyes*. Released by Roadrunner Records on August 9, 1994, it was hailed as an instant classic and became the label's biggest-selling debut ever (an accolade it retained until Slipknot's breakthrough in '99). With its ground-breaking blend of thuggish grooves, vicious thrash and hip hop bravado, not to mention frontman Robb Flynn's incendiary lyrics, *Burn My Eyes* did more than most to redefine metal in the 90s. In fact, forging a new path for metal was precisely what Robb had in mind when he formed Machine Head as a side-project, while still a member of Bay Area thrashers Vio-lence.

"I love those guys and I loved all the music that we made together, but I was ready for something else in my life," Robb recalls today. "So I quit Vio-lence in '92. Right around that time, Ministry needed a touring guitar player. They were fucking *massive* at that point, it was the *Psalm 69* era. They wanted to hear some stuff and I don't know why, but I had some chip on my shoulder and didn't want to send them old music. I wanted to send them *new* music."

Robb had already written a handful of new songs, including *Death Church*, a slow-burning monster that was purposefully distinct from anything he'd written with Vio-lence or his other former band, Forbidden. With syncopated, grinding riffs redolent of Godflesh and Neurosis, and lyrics that went straight for religion's jugular, Machine Head already had a strong identity. Meanwhile, Robb needed help to record his audition for Ministry's touring guitarist role, so he enlisted drummer Chris Kontos, a veteran of the Bay Area hardcore scene with the likes of Attitude Adjustment and Grinch.

"One of Chris's bands had a rehearsal place in Oakland, three blocks from where the stab bing incident happened at the gas station [as documented in Machine Head's *Triple Beam*, from last year's *Catharsis* album]. So going into this neighbourhood, we were bringing guns, we had hoodies up, just trying to be super-incognito and it was *tense*! But we got in there and Chris had this high-tech boombox so we could record in stereo, and we just sat and jammed. It was exciting! As far as I was concerned, that was it. Chris was in bands that were doing stuff… I was at ground zero… I'm hoping to tour with Ministry… so there was no talk of him joining the band."

As Robb notes with a wry smile, the call from Ministry never came. Instead, Robb powered ahead with his new band. Completed by bassist Adam Duce, guitarist Logan Mader and drummer Tony Costanza, with whom Robb wrote several songs that would end up on *Burn My Eyes*, the first Machine Head line-up set about establishing themselves as a ferocious new force in the Bay Area and beyond.

"WE HAD GUNS AND OUR HOODIES UP, TRYING TO BE SUPER-INCOGNITO"

"Tony got us our first gig in Las Vegas, a club show," Robb recalls. "We went down to Vegas, played to 40 people and then got wasted! Ha ha! After that, we had a couple of things under our belts and right about that time Joey [Huston] became our manager and that's when things really started happening."

If Machine Head's demo hadn't been enough to convince Al Jourgensen, it certainly grabbed the attention of Roadrunner Records, who signed the band in 1993 before even having seen them play live. With the likes of Fear Factory, Sepultura, Obituary and Type O Negative on their books, Roadrunner were the perfect home for Robb's epoch-wrenching take on the metal blueprint: all the band needed was a debut album worthy of their burgeoning reputation. With Tony Costanza departing and Chris Kontos returning, this time on a permanent basis, Machine Head were ready to deliver the goods on tape. Recorded at Berkeley's Fantasy Studios, and produced by legendary metal guru Colin Richardson, *Burn My Eyes*' ultra-modern metal anthems perfectly encapsulated both Robb's intense focus *and* the self-inflicted chaos of the young band's lives.

"It was a crazy, intense time. We'd go in and record every day," says Robb. "The guys were all smoking weed. I was sober because I was so fucking focused on getting shit right. But Chris tells this

GETTY

Adam Duce gets wild

story about how we smoked so much weed that we set off the fire alarms and almost killed everybody with the Halon gas that was going to be released. It sucks all of the oxygen out! Ha ha!"

Twenty-five years on, few fans would dispute the enduring power of songs like *Davidian*, *Block* and *Blood For Blood*. With enough old-school bite to keep the thrash contingent happy and vast quantities of contemporary punch and invention, *Burn My Eyes* made a decent fist of uniting the tribes. The album's impact was immediate, particularly in the UK and Europe, but until those sales figures rolled in, Robb remained unsure whether the band had a bright future.

"We didn't think we were going to conquer the world," he shrugs. "We knew the shit we were playing was super-aggressive and was never going to fly on the radio. I wasn't sitting there thinking, 'Oh this is going to set the world on fire!' I just remember trying to make it as heavy, intense, pissed-off, experimental and wild as possible."

Was he conscious of his sound being genuinely new and groundbreaking? Machine Head got tagged with the Pantera/'groove metal' thing, but they never really sounded like that...

"Yeah, that's something that got stuck with us because Pantera were popular at the time. Did we like Pantera? Of course. I'm not gonna say that they weren't an influence. When we were making *Burn My Eyes*, I was all about Dimebag's guitar tone, it was the sickest shit ever! But musically we were coming from a different place. We were coming from Metallica and Slayer, we were coming from Neurosis, we were coming from hardcore and rap. It was just this confluence of music and passion and drive, in a really intense time in our lives, and it became this crazy mishmash of music that really shouldn't have worked. No one realised it was possible. But we did it and it went on to change stuff. It's nuts."

"WE SMOKED SO MUCH WEED THAT WE SET OFF THE FIRE ALARMS AND NEARLY DIED"

If Machine Head's music was an unstoppable force, Robb Flynn's identity as a lyricist was established with similar vigour on *Burn My Eyes*.

Remorselessly furious but literate and inventive, he wrote about the bloody Waco Siege of 1993 in legendary opener *Davidian*. David Koresh, leader of religious cult the Branch Davidians, was holed up in his compound in Texas when a stand-off started between him and the government, who wanted to arrest him on charges of illegal firearms and explosives. Fifty-one days into the siege, he and almost 80 followers died in a fire following an FBI assault. The FBI maintain they did not start the fires.

Robb wrote about the riots in LA in 1992 in twisted interlude *Real Eyes, Realize, Real Lies* and album closer *Block*. Meanwhile, other songs took pointed jabs at religion and political corruption, while slow-burner *I'm Your God Now* tackled the horrors of drug addiction.

Twenty-five years later, it all seems disturbingly relevant to mankind's current state of disarray. When Robb expressed doubts about the lyrics to *Davidian* (*'Let freedom ring with a shotgun blast!'*) after the mass shooting in Vegas in October 2017, it emphasised the edgy, subversive power that Machine Head were wielding back in those early days: this was music born of chaos and rage. No compromise, no fucks given.

"I feel proud of what I was able to say in those songs," Robb states. "I don't want to say it's *political*, but songs like *Davidian* and *Block* were documenting all the crazy shit that was going on. Until then, there was a lot of fantasy stuff in metal and I couldn't connect with it. Rap and punk rock were still about the streets and protest and *anger*. Anger, whether it was right or wrong, just spraying it *everywhere*, is definitely what was getting me off."

As it turned out, a lot of people shared Robb's proclivity for fury. Within a matter of months, Machine Head were being talked about as heavyweights, and following a major European tour as main support to Slayer, the band were soon back as headliners. The rest, as they say, is history – albeit history with a shitload of ups, downs and unexpected detours.

In 2019, Robb is a very different man from the incensed, snotty hooligan who bellowed those *Burn My Eyes* classics. But despite being older and wiser, there lingers a sense that if a riot breaks out any time soon, Robb will be on his bike and into the fray before you can say 'fuck it all'. This autumn, Oakland's premier riot-starters ride again.

"Think about what would've happened if I *had* got the Ministry gig," chuckles Robb. "Machine Head may never have fucking happened. Life is so crazy like that. *Burn My Eyes* could've been our only chance, so we had to come out swinging and swinging harder than any motherfucker out there."

CHRIS KONTOS AND LOGAN MADER REJOIN MACHINE HEAD TO PLAY *BURN MY EYES* IN FULL LATER THIS YEAR – SEE P.109

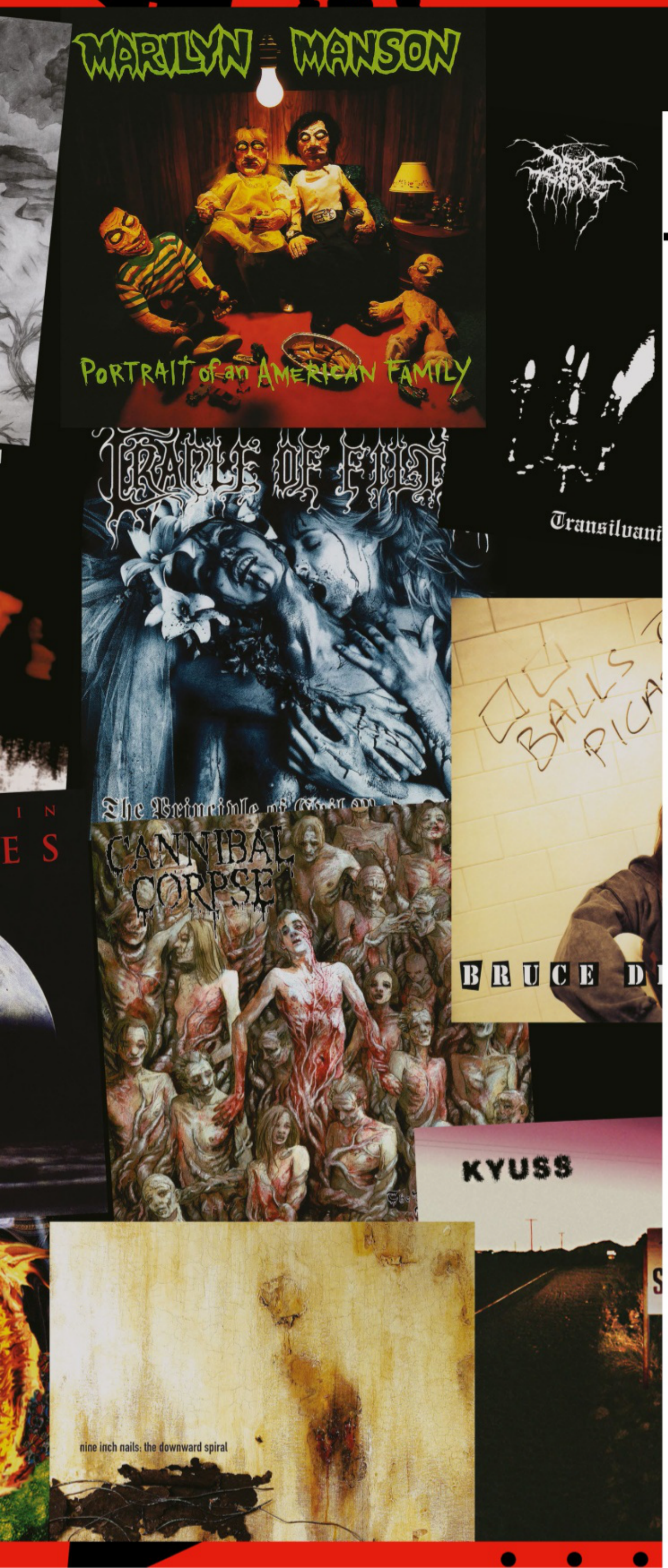
GETTY

1994

THE ALBUMS THAT CHANGED THE WORLD

It wasn't just the year of Machine Head's *Burn My Eyes*. It was the year when metal came of age, bands twisting heavy music into new forms that would echo through the ages

WORDS: CHRIS CHANTLER, ALEC CHILLINGWORTH, ALI COOPER, CONNIE GORDON, STEPHEN HILL
DOM LAWSON, DANNII LEIVERS, MATT MILLS, DAYAL PATTERSON, JONATHAN SELZER, JON WIEDERHON



1994 was the most brilliant, exhilarating, chaotic year in the most turbulent, exciting, glorious decade metal has ever experienced. In the genre's great particle accelerator, atoms were colliding constantly, whole new universes popping into existence every day. By the end of those 12 crazy months, it felt like things would never be the same again. And, as it turned out, they weren't.

It was only a few years since grunge had swept everything before it, killing off cheeseball 80s rock almost overnight and resetting the dial. But it didn't take long for that scene to succumb to its own set of clichés – the posers, the copycats, the barely suppressed desire for stardom. This was history repeating itself: by the time of Kurt Cobain's suicide in April 1994, grunge was just hair metal minus the lipgloss.

But the Seattle scene's initial cultural detonation had a ripple effect that impacted metal. The old bullshit didn't wash any more. Rock stars were out, misfits were in. Style, scenes and personalities were being melted, warped and fused back together, creating an army of bands that would have been chased out of town with pitchforks and flaming torches a few years earlier. Suddenly things looked and sounded very different.

Some artists had been building towards this. Nine Inch Nails started out as the bastard offspring of Ministry and Depeche Mode, but 1994's industrial metal landmark, *The Downward Spiral*, drew everything towards it like a black hole, including a bunch of freaks from Florida calling themselves Marilyn Manson, who released their debut album, *Portrait Of An American Family*, later that same year. Similarly, Seattle's Soundgarden were one of the few bands to emerge from grunge's initial explosion not just unscathed, but stronger and better than they had been before, as their fourth album, *Superunknown*, proved.

Others came out of nowhere.

In California, a gang of Adidas-clad malcontents named Korn were singlehandedly willing an entirely new scene into existence. A couple of years later, it would be dubbed nu metal, by which time it had become one of the defining sounds of the decade. In Massachusetts, the five scrawny hardcore kids named Converge were redrawing the boundaries of that genres in a way that would be widely felt within a few years. In Gothenburg, In Flames gave the feral roar of death metal a laser-sharp focus, instigating a stream of copycat bands that has yet to abate even now.

Traditional metal might have been assailed on all sides by changing trends, but it refused to go down. Its rearguard action was being led by Pantera, the Texan shitkickers who dragged it kicking and screaming into the modern age. Up in Scandinavia, the likes of Emperor, Darkthrone and Satyricon were showing that black metal had an artistry to match the controversy, something that had been unthinkable even a year before.

What all these bands had in common was that they were outsiders, a relentless parade of square pegs refusing to be hammered into any holes, no matter what their shape. There was seemingly little to link Louisiana's Acid Bath with Palm Desert's Kyuss or Northern Ireland's Therapy?, but they all had a burning desire to tear down the old order.

As 1994 progressed, metal's metaphorical star-map began to blaze, a thousand connected points of light that mirrored the burgeoning World Wide Web, itself the most significant technological advance of the last 30 years. Suddenly, everything was up for grabs and there were a thousand bands waiting to take it.

Things have changed and changed again countless times since then, but the aftershocks of the cultural earthquake that took place 25 years ago have left their mark. Modern metal still owes a huge debt to 1994.

MARILYN MANSON

PORTRAIT OF AN AMERICAN FAMILY

Exposing the hypocrisy of American society, Marilyn Manson was on the way to becoming a pariah

IN THE SUMMER of 1994, a storm was brewing on the streets of Fort Lauderdale, Florida – the God Of Fuck cometh. America's misfit youth couldn't relate to the dirge of grunge and needed a lot more bite and visual entertainment from their music. Cue Marilyn Manson, a book easily judged by its cover. From the outset, their revolutionary approach to developing stage names from the moniker of a pop culture icon juxtaposed with that of a serial killer toyed with public and parental anxiety. The outfit's alter egos – Marilyn Manson, Daisy Berkowitz, Gidget Gein, Madonna Wayne Gacy and Sara Lee Lucas – were born. This band were no Nirvana.

Marilyn Manson, formerly Brian Warner, started out as a music journalist. In the process, he met Nine Inch Nails' Trent Reznor, who ended up producing and releasing Manson's first record on his label, Nothing Records. Initially dubbed The Manson Family Album and sporting an album cover almost as dehumanising as the cacophony it contained, *Portrait Of An American Family* was a debut befitting of iconoclasts taking metal to the sick, obscene extreme that NIN introduced.

A caustic collection of twisted anthems by, and for, a messed-up youth, *Portrait...*'s lyrical content captured the adolescence of the Marilyn Manson persona. *'I wear this fucking mask because you cannot handle me,'* spat *Organ Grinder*, a punk-esque onslaught of the creepiest variety. The God Of Fuck declared his presence in *Cake And Sodomy*, laced with acerbic observations such as, *'If you're so good, explain the shit stains on your face,'* that have since become his trademark.

Littered with janky soundbites and menacing samples, only Manson could quote Roald Dahl – on *Prelude (The Family Trip)* – and make it sinister. He dedicated album highlight *Dope Hat*'s music video to Dahl's curious character Willy Wonka, and introduced the band's future in contagious, roof-raising rhythms. The disgustingly iconic *Lunchbox*, the decidedly chaotic *Dogma* and the self-reflective *Snake Eyes And Sissies* threw a generous helping of industrial disorder into the already repulsive cauldron of Marilyn Manson.

Wrapped In Plastic took the album's title by the throat and deformed the American Dream into a nightmare. While the addictive *Get Your Gunn* denounced *'talk shows for the weak,'* the band would reluctantly grace US chat programme *The Phil Donahue Show* a year later to defend moshing against the rising public terror of the dangers at heavy concerts. Their presence in their gender-bending forms to visually match the aural invasion of *Portrait...* did little to quell popular fear.

Devoid of contagious choruses and sing-along melodies, documenting the history of Marilyn Manson, and indeed of the music world in 1994 as a whole, we should acknowledge the sheer guts it took for these five Floridian misfits to present *Portrait Of An American Family* to the world without explanation, shame or apology.

THEY TOOK METAL TO THE SICK, OBSCENE EXTREME

The God Of Fuck started as he meant to carry on

MARILYN MANSON: GETTY

PANTERA

FAR BEYOND DRIVEN

The moment the Texans revolutionised metal and opened the door to a new breed of bands

THE HEAVIEST ALBUM to ever hit the top spot on the Billboard 200? On *Far Beyond Driven*, Pantera created a new benchmark for heavy music. Any fears that the Texans would dull down their metallic approach after the success of 1992's *Vulgar Display Of Power* album were swiftly extinguished from the second that opener *Strength Beyond Strength* came roaring out of the speakers, all acidic spittle and bone-snapping grooves. It rarely drops in intensity either, until Pantera decide to close the record by showing a more blissed-out side with a cover of Black Sabbath's *Planet Caravan*.

Not only was *Far Beyond Driven* an instantly classic record, featuring songs such as *I'm Broken* and *5 Minutes Alone* – which became anthemic staples in the band's set until the end of their career – it gave metal a shot in the arm at a time when the world was saying it was dead. Instead, Pantera's success allowed a new breed of heavy bands to make fresh and exhilarating new heavy music. Quite what the landscape of the scene we hold so dear would look like today, without their staunch and stubborn refusal to compromise their love of metal, doesn't bear thinking about. The fact that they decided to take things even further on 1996 follow-up album *The Great Southern Trendkill* speaks even greater volumes. Such is the quality of their back catalogue, everyone has their own personal favourite Pantera full-length. But for a single planting of the flag and a two-fingered salute to metal's doubters, there's not much more inspiring than this masterpiece.

PANTERA: GETTY. MAYHEM: NIHIL ARCHIVE/PRESS

MAYHEM

DE MYSTERIIS DOM SATHANAS

Norwegian black metal's most notorious band laid down the blueprint for a genre

"DREAMS ABOUT TRANSYLVANIA, ancient legends and dark moods, like how it looks when a thick heavy fog lies on the ground at funerals in Transylvania…" This is how Mayhem guitarist and black metal scene figurehead Euronymous summed up the band's thematic obsessions in Irish fanzine *The Oath*, published posthumously in 1994. These "dark moods" are so hauntingly evoked on Mayhem's first studio LP, *De Mysteriis Dom Sathanas*, that Transylvanian graveyard mist seems to exude out of the speakers, from the cold-open whipcrack of *Funeral Fog* to the final truncated chord of the magisterial title track. Even if you hear the record with no knowledge of its hair-raising backstory, it distinguishes itself as the eerily cold, dark, fetid work of fucked-up, death-obsessed minds – albeit minds that can concoct tunes as flat-out catchy as *Freezing Moon*.

By the time it came out in May 1994, *DMDS* was already the most notorious album in metal history. A week before its release, the LP's session bass player, Burzum's Count Grishnackh, was sentenced to 21 years for Euronymous's murder, and the shocking crimewave of assault and church-burning undertaken by Norway's black metal 'Inner Circle' had become a world news circus. Happily – if that's the right word – the lurid circumstances and media frenzy remain overshadowed by these eight tracks themselves: by Hellhammer's inexorable percussive force; by the merciless, hypnotic death-rattle of Euronymous's guitar; by Attila Csihar's freakish, one-of-a-kind vocal performance ("He sings like a sick priest!" Euronymous enthused to Enslaved frontman Grutle Kjellson); and by this short-lived line-up's compelling combination of wild, visceral abandon and calculated innovation. Twenty-five years on, these are the reasons it continues to grow with repeated listens. It's an extraordinary meeting of charismatic transgressors and eccentrics, united in the focus of creating the most pitiless and deathly music that ever existed.

A metal band... wearing *tracksuits*?! Whatever next?!

KORN

KORN

No one was ready for Korn's rattling onslaught, and one of the defining nu metal releases

THERE ARE A handful of albums in the history of heavy metal that can be considered genuine game-changing moments in our history. The first Black Sabbath's album, Maiden's *Number Of The Beast*, Metallica's *Master Of Puppets*. And the debut album from Bakersfield quintet Korn, AKA the godfathers of nu metal, can proudly stand shoulder to shoulder with any of them. While nu metal ended up booming and busting in such a short space of time, Korn completely reshaped what it meant to be a metal band. Not only did they look utterly unlike anything or anyone within our world, not only were they pulling from an entirely unique set of influences that the metal universe had never leaned on before, but they also changed the language of what bands could say within the confines of heavy music. Korn weren't just an unusual band, they were aliens, beamed down from an alternate universe, where baggy-trousered hip hop kids could strap on seven-stringed guitars that were tuned down to bowel-loosening levels, and wail uncontrollably at the deepest, darkest feelings of pain, resentment and hurt that were infecting their life.

Their debut album was a nuclear bomb that made the best metal bands look a bit silly and the rest look totally obsolete. From the iconic cymbal tingle of opener *Blind*, it was clear this wasn't a normal metal record; when we heard Jonathan Davis enquire whether or not we were ready, it was unnervingly distinctive. For the rest of the album, Korn's unique melding of rap grooves, metallic riffs and Jonathan's startling, almost gothic, croon-to-bellow were captivating. *Clown, Ball Tongue, Need To, Shoots And Ladders, Faget...* today the tracklisting reads like a greatest-hits set, but who could have predicted that such brutally heavy and harrowing content would dominate the scene?

By the time *Korn* ended with *Daddy*, one of the most uncomfortable listening experiences in the history of music, the metal world as we knew it had been turned upside down and would never be the same again. Korn became the coolest of cool names to drop by both peers and contemporaries. Robb Flynn and Max Cavalera were so blown away by what they heard, they mentioned the band in practically every interview at the time. Spreading the word slowly and organically, by the time Korn turned up at the 1996 Monsters Of Rock at Donington Park, the scene was set. They stole the day and ushered in a sharp left turn for our world. Twelve tracks that represented a truly revolutionary moment in the history of the music we hold dear.

THEY MADE THE BEST METAL BANDS LOOK SILLY AND THE REST OBSOLETE

KORN: GETTY

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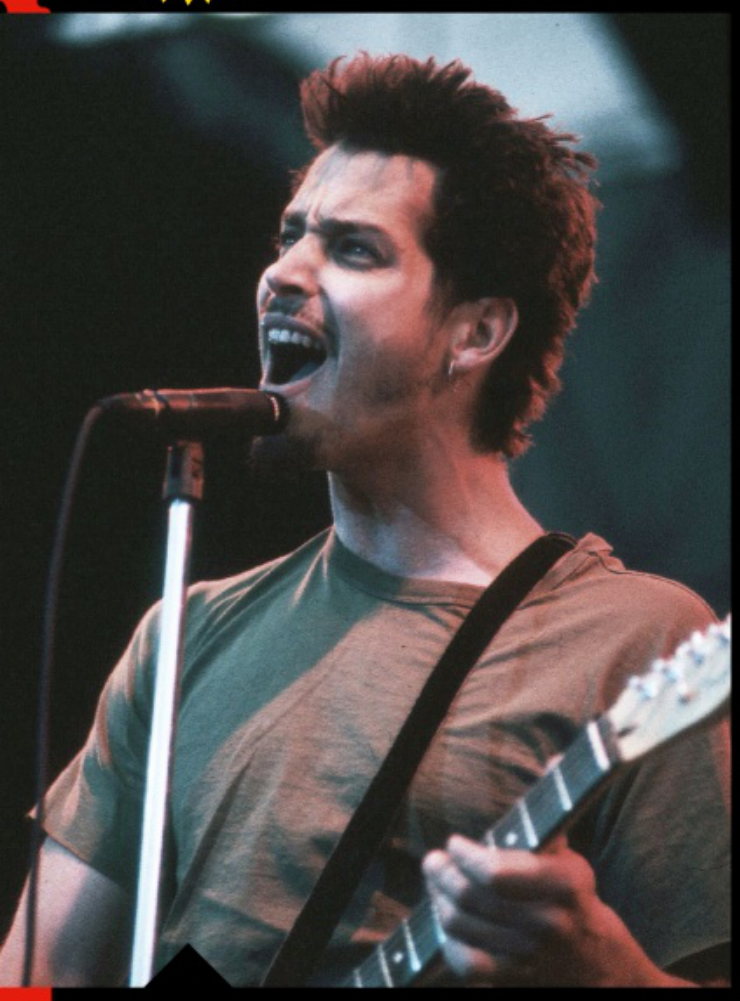

SOUNDGARDEN

SUPERUNKNOWN

Their breakthrough album, a grunge classic, and an emotional part of Chris Cornell's legacy

SOUNDGARDEN WERE ALREADY a big deal before *Superunknown* was unleashed. They were the first grunge band to sign to a major, they toured with the likes of Skid Row and Guns N' Roses, and released the superb *Badmotorfinger* album in 1991. But their fourth album remains their finest moment, and biggest commercial achievement. Much of it was built on the monolithic success of the *Black Hole Sun* single, which became an anthem the world over, but there was so much more to *Superunknown*. The slow, Sabbathy doom of *4th Of July*; the spidery, snake of a riff that powers the title track; the odd, rhythmic time signatures that move you on *Spoonman*; Kim Thayil's endless pot of hulking rock riffs. Most importantly and essentially, there was vocalist Chris Cornell, who put in an almost inhuman performance.

Listening back today, with the knowledge we have about him, it's heartbreaking and painful to listen to *The Day I Tried To Live* or *Fell On Black Days*. But such is his and the band's quality, you still can't turn the record off. *Superunknown* won Soundgarden two Grammys and turned them into megastars, but more importantly, it will always be a window into the mind of a brilliant and troubled genius that connected with millions the world over.

CRADLE OF FILTH

THE PRINCIPLE OF EVIL MADE FLESH

Their debut brought gothic grandiosity to extreme metal, eventually turning them into an institution

WHILE CRADLE ARE not generally considered a black metal band today, things were different in the early-to-mid-90s. The band's first full-length album was both a commercial and creative success, and led to praise from fans and bands alike around the world, including established Norwegian bands of the time such as Emperor. And really that shouldn't come as a surprise, given the abundance of atmosphere and quality songwriting on this lengthy – yet always consistent – record.

With an unusually authentic-feeling occult foundation (in part a result of contributions from the band's label boss, 'Frater Nihil', and their vocalist, dancer and 'Satanic advisor' Andrea Meyer), these strangely organic and often minimal recordings managed to conjure an air of majesty and mystery. At the album's heart was violent, raw black metal and stripped-down riffing, but the Brits broke new ground by adding a creepy gothic touch, making use of piano melodies and female vocals while never straying into the more symphonic territories they would later become famous for. They would thrust themselves more firmly into the mainstream two years later with the release of follow-up *Dusk... And Her Embrace*, but it was undoubtedly this album that launched their career.

CONVERGE

HALO IN A HAYSTACK

Combining teenage aggression with the excitement of the hardcore scene, Converge began their influential journey

JACOB BANNON AND his Converge bandmates were only teenagers when their band's debut album was released. And while you can hear the youthful exuberance and excitement of the nascent Boston, Massachusetts underground hardcore scene in *Halo In A Haystack*, there wouldn't have been many people at the time who thought they were hearing the sound of a band that would go on to become genuine, underground cult icons. Instead, *Halo In A Haystack* was a record that inspired those around them to try to adapt and mutate the hardcore genre into something heavier, more scabrous and more personal than it had previously been.

There are certainly moments here where you can hear glimpses of what Converge were going to become; Jacob himself is instantly recognisable as a more excitable version of his latter self. Still full of energy and rage, but bringing a grander and more expressive vibe to music that, at that point, was mostly about 'the scene' and outright aggression. Over the next 25 years, they'd go on to top *Halo In A Haystack* time and time again, but as a document of where Converge's journey began, this is a fascinating listen. Songs such as the crushing *Exhale* still sound beautifully chaotic to this day.

HELMET

BETTY

New York alt-metallers hit their career peak with a masterclass in dynamics and groove

LOOK BACK THROUGH much of America's metal and underground rock scenes of the early 90s, and you'll find a common thread of masculinity in crisis. From Nirvana's existential self-questioning through the self-recriminations of The Afghan Whigs' *Gentlemen*, to the body horror of The Jesus Lizard and vast majority of the Touch And Go and Amphetamine Reptile rosters, the psychological frisson that was opening up had become a hugely creative, knife-edge spur. New York waged this internal war on two distinct fronts: the molten, gothic-tinged rage of Type O Negative and Life Of Agony, and the minimalist urban paranoia of Unsane, Prong and Helmet.

The latter had already made their mark with 1990's *Strap It On* and 1992's *Meantime*, their bracingly stripped-down, staccato groove distilling frontman and founder member Page Hamilton's jazz background into off-kilter time signatures that felt like a palpitating heartbeat on steroids. *Betty*, however, made the whole enterprise *fun*. More generous in tone, the grooves now spring-loaded, it was a masterclass in fuss-free dynamics where every lunge of riff found an exhilarating counter-reaction. Sadly, Helmet never hit the same heights again, but *Biscuit For Smut*'s pneumatic thrill ride and *Milquetoast*'s heavy bass underpinning forged DNA that's still rampant to this very day.

SOUNDGARDEN: GETTY

Roof Down create a unique style of alternative rock and are often compared with bands like Pearl Jam and Soundgarden.
Their music has it's roots in grunge rock but at the same time it rockets away to a modern 90's rock-based barrage!

LOUNA // PANOPTICON

PANOPTICON FEATURES 10 OF THE BEST SONGS FROM THEIR WE ARE LOUNA AND BRAVE NEW WORLD RUSSIAN ALBUMS, WITH TEXT ADAPTED INTO ENGLISH BY TRAVIS LEAKE IN COLLABORATION WITH DAN KORNEFF (PARAMORE, PAPA ROACH). FEATURES GUEST APPEARANCES FROM C. MABBIT AND K. THRASHER OF ESCAPE THE FATE

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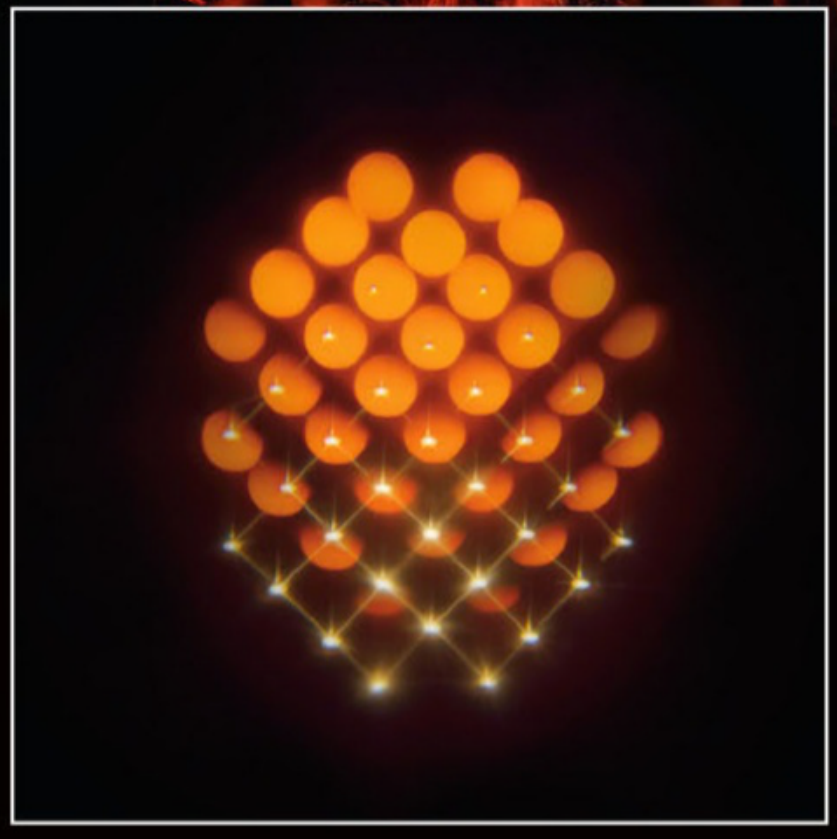

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1994 ALBUMS

Trent onstage at the London Forum, May 24, 1994. Accessible synth-pop? Ha!

APPETITE FOR DESTRUCTION

Powered by creative freedom and recorded at the Tate house where the Manson murders took place, unsettling second album *The Downward Spiral* sealed Nine Inch Nails' reputation as industrial legends

WORDS: JON WIEDERHORN

NINE INCH NAILS

The Downward Spiral

Nine Inch Nails' debut album, 1989's *Pretty Hate Machine*, was an angsty, electronic pop album coloured with grinding samples and sporadic guitar blasts that sounded like a head-on collision between Depeche Mode and Killing Joke. Released on TVT Records (which had previously put out discs of television theme songs), it was embraced by both the alt-rock and industrial dance communities and earned Nine Inch Nails a loyal following. Then, frontman Trent Reznor took an abrupt left turn. Frustrated by his label's refusal to renegotiate his record deal, Nine Inch Nails wrote 1992 EP *Broken* – a faster, more aggressive slab heavily inspired by Ministry, Skinny Puppy and Joy Division. TVT president Steve Gottlieb struck a deal with Interscope head Jimmy Iovine, and Nine Inch Nails were transferred to a new imprint, Nothing.

With a new home and a vanity label on which to bring in new talent, the band started working on a follow-up. But Trent had no intention of making accessible synth-pop for his new owners; *The Downward Spiral* is strange, unsettling and schizophrenic.

"At first, I thought there was a danger that there weren't any real singles on the record, and people that really liked *Pretty Hate Machine* wouldn't like *The Downward Spiral*," Trent said in early 1994, before the March 8 album release. "And I was worried that people that were more into the metal sound of *Broken* wouldn't like it. I thought I quite intentionally may have shot myself in the foot commercially. I didn't do that just to fuck myself up, either. It's what popped out of my head and was the strongest ▶

"TRENT NEVER GAVE A SHIT ABOUT DOING ANYTHING TO PLEASE THE FANS"

CHRIS VRENNA

GETTY

statement I could make. Fortunately, people identified with it."

Songs like *Mr. Self Destruct* and *March Of The Pigs* were fast, heavy and reminiscent of *Broken* but with more emotional depth. Most of the rest of the album was mid-tempo, with an underworld of unnerving sounds that ebbed and flowed like a stop-motion film of contaminated ocean waves. It was all hellishly infectious. *Piggy* balanced skewed samples with a sluggish, near-reggae bassline; *Ruiner* drew from hip hop beats and a simple melody reminiscent of *Pretty Hate Machine*'s *Down In It*, before evolving into a near-orchestral wash of sound. It was a feast of unconventional rhythms, barbed hooks, abrupt tempo changes and torrents of noise that sometimes continued after the rest of the instruments cut out.

"There are a few parts on the record that are purposely messed up structurally," says drummer and sound designer Chris Vrenna, who was in the band from *Pretty Hate Machine* through the end of the tour for *The Downward Spiral*. "The live drum solo at the end of *Piggy* is intentionally crazy and off-tempo, and for that piano part at the end of *Closer*, Trent played it but didn't quantize the MIDI [a process in which slightly off-tempo notes are digitally altered so they're perfectly in time with the beat], so it wasn't exactly the same feel or speed as the rest of the song."

Robin Finck heading down the spiral

There was no denying the artistry behind *The Downward Spiral*. Trent's determination to follow his instincts and peel back the layers of his previous work to see what lurked deep inside resulted in an album that was emotionally dense, utterly authentic and immaculately conceived. And there was a brazen perversity that flowed through it all. Even after the band finished the music for *Closer*, the closest thing they had created to a pure pop song, Trent put a lyrical stamp on it that rendered it virtually unplayable by mainstream media.

"ALL THESE CHARLES MANSON FANS WOULD CLIMB UP THE HILL AND END UP IN OUR FRONT YARD"

CHRIS VRENNA

"We were all working on something one night and Trent came in the next morning and showed us the lyrics of *Closer* for the first time," recalls Chris Vrenna. "Our producer, Flood, and I looked at each other and I told Trent, 'Well, you had the pop single for the record until you said 'fuck' in every line of the chorus.' Trent started laughing and he said, 'I know.' He did it on purpose because he didn't want, necessarily, to have such an overt pop song."

Two months after the release of *The Downward Spiral*, alternative radio was clamouring for a clean edit of *Closer*. All Nine Inch Nails had to do was take the swear words out of the chorus. Trent didn't want to replace them with bleeps or sound effects, so he reluctantly agreed to leave a blank space, but it wasn't quite that simple.

"He said, 'I wonder what the least amount of the word 'fuck' is that we can snip out of the word and get away with it as a clean version,'" recalls Chris.

GETTY

NIN tearing London a new one on the second date of a three-night stint in the capital in '94

"So when you listen closely to the clean version, you can hear the beginning of the 'f' and the end of the 'k'."

Trent's determination to create an original, dark album that paid tribute to pioneers of guitar-bristling industrial was evident. Less obvious influences included David Bowie and Iggy Pop. "Bowie's Berlin trilogy was big for us," Chris admits. "We listened to *Low*, *Lodger* and *Heroes* a lot, as well as Iggy's *The Idiot*. Those were really important records that helped convince us that we were doing the right thing by making this weird music that we wanted to make. Trent never gave a shit about doing anything to please the fans."

To colour his dark creativity blood-red, Trent chose to write and record *The Downward Spiral* at 10050 Cielo Drive in Los Angeles. It was the site where actress Sharon Tate and four others were brutally murdered on August 8, 1969, by four members of the Charles Manson family. Trent was fascinated by the history and the lingering feeling of evil. The band intentionally placed the mixing board and main control area in the exact location of the couch where Tate was found murdered, Chris says, and Trent slept in Tate's master bedroom. Nine Inch Nails weren't the only ones drawn to the ugly past of the place.

"All these Charles Manson fans showed up while we were there," Chris recalls. "We would have people climb over the gate. The house was on a hill by itself, and people would park at the bottom of the hill a block below it and climb through the brush up the front of the hill and end up in our front yard. I can't tell you how many times I'd walk in and go, 'Fuck, who the hell are you?'"

The Tate House provided an ominous, unusual and inspiring atmosphere for Nine Inch Nails.

"It was a breeding ground for ideas," Chris says. "It took a long time, but everything flowed naturally and we knew we were on to something. Our producer Flood was living with us, we were in Los Angeles, and we were able to explore the whole scene and do rock star stuff."

During the week, Trent and Chris were determined and dedicated, so partying was kept to a minimum. But weekends were another story. "We would throw parties at the house and do crazy shit," Chris recalls. "We saved the partying for the weekends. It wasn't a daily thing. It was a special occasion kind of thing. The ramp-up of serious drugs and alcohol happened on tour, like it always does. Idle hands do the devil's work. You go onstage for 90 awesome minutes and then what are you gonna do all night? You go party because you get to sleep all day until soundcheck the next day."

Joining Trent and Chris in the studio were ex Jane's Addiction and Porno For Pyros drummer Stephen Perkins, and prog guitarist Adrian Belew. One of the first songs the band worked on was *Mr. Self Destruct*. Trent encouraged Adrian to play as noisily as possible while he and Chris embellished the beats with clattering, cacophonic samples. With the foundation set, Nine Inch Nails worked on various songs

GETTY

You want to do *what* like an animal, Trent?!?!

simultaneously. Chris, Flood and Trent looped many of the recorded drums, guitars and keys, then fed them into the computer where they further manipulated into the sounds. As involved as the process was, the musicians enjoyed the spontaneity and the results spoke for themselves.

"A lot of what I loved about …*Spiral* is that many of the sounds aren't even real instruments, they're noises," Chris says. "*The Becoming* has that 'chinky-chinky-chink' rhythm at the beginning. Me and Trent each had a handful of silverware and we dropped it all in little piles and recorded the sounds they made. We did anything and everything to make these sounds into really cool songs."

As sound designer, Chris spent much of his time walking around with a portable DAT machine and making field recordings of various noises and sound effects from movies. He cut up the recorded content and built sample banks. "I'd stay up all night and come in with, like, 40 different new loops or noises or samples or parts," he says. "I'd give them to Trent in the morning while he was in the bedroom working on lyrics. He'd stop what he was doing, play through them and go, 'Holy shit, this one's cool! Alright, we're starting a new song today!' And the next thing we did would be based on that loop I put together."

The last song Nine Inch Nails recorded for *The Downward Spiral* was *Hurt*. The album already featured plenty of bleak, despairing moments, yet the album closer was another beast entirely – mostly organic instead of electronic, and more vulnerable than confrontational. "We didn't do that at the Tate house," Chris says. "It was an idea Trent had been working with on his own for quite some time. He came to us and said, 'I've got one more. It may not work. It's a really sad song. It's definitely an album closer.'"

"BY THE SECOND CHORUS, I HAD TEARS RUNNING DOWN MY FACE"

CHRIS VRENNA

Trent and Chris entered A&M Studios with producer and engineer Sean Beavan to work on the track. "Trent was singing the words and we were all watching in awe," recalls Chris. "By the second chorus, I had tears running down my face and I looked over at Sean and his face is all red and his eyes are all watery. We were all crying. Once we got our shit together, we all went, 'Yeah, that's a great one right there.'"

Looking back at the experience of making *The Downward Spiral*, Chris concludes that it was definitely a product of its time and that, had it been made a decade later, audiences might have thought it was too weird or noisy for mass consumption and wouldn't have given it enough time to pick up on the nuances.

"People don't want to really listen closely to anything anymore and discover the subtleties or why something might be great even if it's not traditional," Chris says. "There was something about the whole process of making that album – the house, the timing and all the music – that made it one of the best years of my life."

NINE INCH NAILS' *BAD WITCH* IS OUT NOW VIA CAROLINE INTERNATIONAL. CHRIS IS CURRENTLY WORKING WITH PRODUCER NICK RASKULINECZ ON THE NEW CODE ORANGE ALBUM AND TEACHES MUSIC AT CALHOUN COLLEGE, HUNTSVILLE

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“WE WERE INSPIRED BY SOUNDTRACKS THAT WENT ALONG WITH BIG FANTASY MOVIES”

IHSAHN

PRESS

THE NIGHT KINGS

By the time Emperor released *In The Nightside Eclipse*, the actions of Norway's black metal Inner Circle threatened to overshadow their music. Yet it remains one of the genre's defining albums

WORDS: CHRIS CHANTLER

EMPEROR
In The Nightside Eclipse

The internet seems to think *In The Nightside Eclipse* came out on February 21, 1994, yet anyone who was there at the time will recall the agonising delays that pushed Emperor's hotly anticipated debut LP back throughout that year. The record wasn't unleashed until mid-December '94 – 17 months after it was recorded, "under the seventh full moon anno 1993" (as specified in the liner notes) – at the end of a breathtakingly fertile year for the newly ascendant force of Norwegian

black metal. Mayhem's *De Mysteriis Dom Sathanas*, Burzum's *Hvis Lyset Tar Oss*, Darkthrone's *Transilvanian Hunger*, debuts from Gorgoroth and Dimmu Borgir, and the first two albums by Enslaved and Satyricon all emerged in the time it took for *Nightside* to get its act together. After setting the underground on fire with the *Wrath Of The Tyrant* demo in 1992 and an eponymous EP in '93, the still-teenaged Emperor – guitarist/vocalist/keyboardist Ihsahn, guitarist Samoth, bassist Tchort and drummer Faust – had a lot of ground to make up, and a hell of a lot to live up to.

The album's producer, Eirik 'Pytten' Hundvin – already Norwegian BM's go-to sound man after helming recordings by Immortal, Burzum and Mayhem at Grieghallen Studios in Bergen – checked his original notes to help us pin down the reasons for *Nightside*'s colossal delay. "I have been through my files from the production and can confirm that mixing was complicated," Pytten declares. "We had a 16-track analogue multitrack, and linked to it by [timecode-reading device] SMPTE was an Atari computer with linked midi keyboards and sound modules, probably also an 8-track digital recorder. This is a very time-consuming set-up to work. In addition was everyone's high expectations of the final result, and accordingly some remixes of the songs were adding time."

Ihsahn remembers remixing *The Majesty Of The Night Sky* "17 times before we were satisfied," and as Pytten points out, it was a laborious commute for the young band; Grieghallen lies more than 200 miles west of Emperor's home town Notodden, in Norway's Telemark region. Pytten confirms the final day of mastering as August 9, 1994, adding, "Approximately two weeks later all finances were settled. If my notes and memory is accurate, this is a highly acceptable time for settling an invoice!"

Aside from painstaking studio niggles, there was another, more unorthodox reason for *Nightside*'s delay. Shortly after recording it, three-quarters of Emperor were imprisoned for a variety of hair-raising crimes: Faust for murder, Samoth for arson and Tchort for assault. This quartet of misanthropic souls were positioned at the dark heart of an alarming new phenomenon: the Norwegian black metal 'Inner Circle', a loose association of like-minded musicians whose turbulent antisocial oneupmanship quickly spiralled out of control. In the time between *Nightside*'s recording and release, Mayhem guitarist Euronymous had been murdered and Burzum's Count Grishnackh imprisoned for the crime, and Norwegian black metal had

NIHIL ARCHIVE

grown from a freakishly cult regional micro-scene to a thriving movement of international infamy.

Yet under all this pressure, *Nightside* became arguably the crowning achievement of its era – a dizzying, haunting, tempestuous masterwork pushing boundaries of composition, melody and atmosphere to make it arguably the most far-reaching artefact from Norse BM's early years. The band never had any doubt of their debut's potency: "It will be a monument in black metal history," Samoth promised in March '94 to excellently titled Finnish zine *Pure Fucking Hell*.

This was a busy time for the guitarist; as well as Emperor, Samoth's six-string bolstered releases by Arcturus, Satyricon and Gorgoroth, in addition to session bass-work for Burzum. "It's Samoth who had all the connections, and I tagged along!" admits Ihsahn, recalling the incestuous nature of the Norwegian scene in these early days. "At the time extreme metal was dominated by Swedish and American bands, so maybe since we all hung out a lot, going to shows, a Norwegian identity was created. It fit better with our surroundings. *In The Nightside Eclipse* was very much influenced by descriptions of stuff that look very much like our Telemark nature."

"IT'S ALMOST PARADOXICAL TO BE SO THANKFUL FOR BLACK METAL, GIVEN THE EVILNESS OF IT"

IHSAHN

The LP's dramatic evocation of place was signposted by its gatefold sleeve, Kristian 'Necrolord' Wåhlin's moonlit panorama opening to reveal a glorious 24-inch photograph of a mountainous wooded fjord. MTV went to Ihsahn's home for an interview in '94, the black-clad youth filmed stalking around conifers, gazing pensively at waterfalls and ruminating on "the winds, the rains… the wastelands, the emptiness, the silence…" Far more than Satan, the unifying essence and motivational impetus of *Nightside* is the mysterious, rugged landscape of Emperor's homeland – albeit populated by some deeply unnatural beings.

"We had a strong need for expression, so it was easy to channel that into fantasy-like images and larger-than-life sounds," recalls Ihsahn. "We were just as inspired by soundtracks that went along with big fantasy movies. We started out with some epicness on the first Emperor EP, but it became very obvious that we wanted to do something that was just out of this world."

Assisting in that regard was Pytten's *Nightside* production, an oppressive cacophony of barbed guitars, blitzkrieg drums and triumphing synth flourishes, heaving with apocalyptic sound effects. Production polarised opinion from day one, some feeling alienated by the harsh, wayward blizzard of sound, others powerfully immersed in its cryptic embrace.

"Aahh, this is a tricky question," remarks Pytten, when asked how his assessment of the finished product has changed over the years. "With such long times working on the production, so many hours in the studio, so many replays of the songs, so many tries to get the music right, I can go on… I have to admit my first feeling was relief! But the way I see the album after the fatigue left me is that I have never thought, 'Oh if I only had done so and so instead…' I think, whatever words are put on the production, this is a captured sound that has a lasting quality. I am quite proud of what we all achieved."

Ihsahn's assessment from the quarter-century perspective is even more touching and heartfelt. "I think it's the purity of it," ponders the frontman, considering why Emperor's debut has survived so timelessly. "We had no commercial ambitions; there were none to have. It sounds romantic, but all this music was made purely with artistic motivations, this total, introverted, Norwegian 'keep it to ourselves' attitude is what enabled us to create something that no one else had done.

"I always look back at albums and think, 'Ah, I could have changed that,' but then you go beyond that, it becomes so old that you just appreciate it for being a representation of where you were at that point. And this wasn't just 25 years ago, it's almost like another life, being basically a kid. I look back and I think, 'What an immense privilege, to be able to so deeply get to dedicate so much time and attention to this thing called music that I love so much.' That whole time formed the basis of me being able to do this for 25 years. What a stroke of luck! It's almost paradoxical to be so thankful for black metal, given the evilness of it all…"

IHSAHN'S LATEST ALBUM, *ÁMR*, IS OUT NOW VIA CANDLELIGHT RECORDS

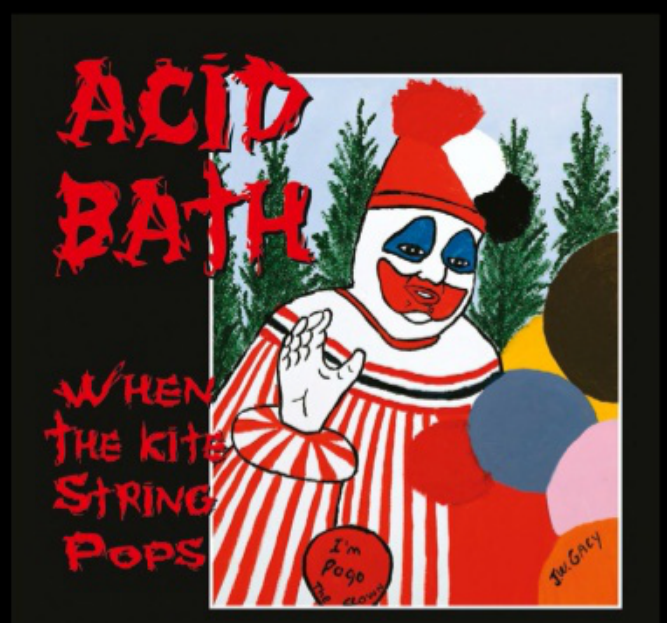
PRESS

1994 ALBUMS

ACID BATH

WHEN THE KITE STRING POPS

NOLA sludge lords created a brilliantly hellish record before being cut down in their prime



THERE WERE A load of sublimely heavy bands that came from the stifling heat of the New Orleans scene in the early 90s, but perhaps the most notorious was Acid Bath. Despite only existing as a band for a mere six-year period, they created a back catalogue of such depraved, pain-inducing sludge metal that they remain a true underground cult act, all these years later. Their debut album, *When The Kite String Pops*, continues to set a high watermark for the genre, alongside the work of their peers and contemporaries such as Eyehategod and Crowbar.

There was something fascinatingly disturbing and unnerving about *When The Kite String Pops*. It could have been the chilling front cover image of Pogo The Clown, the alter ego of serial killer John Wayne Gacy, as painted by the man himself. Alternatively, the use of clips from controversial films such as David Lynch's *Blue Velvet* and Stanley Kubrick's *A Clockwork Orange*, submerged by an oppressive slurry of metallic riffs, may be the thing that stirs up such unease. But, most likely, it was the images of sheer, visceral, violent disgust that vocalist Dax Riggs painted in songs such as *What Color Is Death, Dope Fiend* and *Cheap Vodka*. There was some brief respite in *Scream Of The Butterfly*, when Acid Bath momentarily sounded like a traditional metal band, but, for the most part, *WTKSP*s was a terrifying and hellish listen. Acid Bath would only release one more album, 1996's *Paegan Terrorism Tactics*, before disbanding following the tragic and senseless death of bassist Audie Pitre at the hands of a drunk driver, in 1997. Over the years, as the sludge metal scene has grown and spread out around the world, Acid Bath's status as innovators and godfathers of this style has increased, and *When The Kite String Pops* is a world-class example.

PRONG

CLEANSING

Even Beavis and Butt-Head liked this album full of industrial-tinged club bangers

PRONG WERE A decent, if not especially revolutionary, metal band at the start of 1994. But the combination of frontman Tommy Victor's desire to move away from more standard thrash stylings and into more groove and industrial territories, plus the addition of former Killing Joke members Paul Raven and John Bechdel, changed all that. *Cleansing* remains their definitive album, full of throbbing rhythms and stabbing riffs that personify the 90s 'rock club banger' sound perfectly.

While it's impossible to stop nodding your head to utter ragers such as *Whose Fist Is This Anyway?* or *Broken Peace*, the centrepiece of the record was undoubtedly the anthemic *Snap Your Fingers, Snap Your Neck*. It appeared on an episode of *Beavis And Butt-Head*, where the duo were unusually positive about what they were seeing for once, and it was adopted by ECW wrestler Justin Credible for his entrance music – all of which turned it into a major crossover success. That opening bass bounce is still instantly recognisable to metal fans 25 years on. It was a short stint in the public eye for Prong, who are still releasing excellent music to this day, but the quality of *Cleansing* is proof of just how deserved their success was.

DARKTHRONE

TRANSILVANIAN HUNGER

Though controversial in its lyrics and presentation, Transilvanian Hunger *became iconic for Darkthrone and the scene*

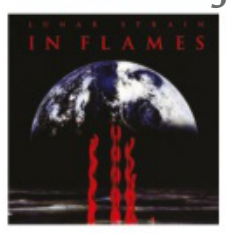
FUELLED BY AN anger drawn from the turbulent events in both the black metal scene and the members' personal lives, the utter fury of *Transilvanian Hunger* saw it immediately recognised as a raw, hateful classic. It helped that it featured one of black metal's most famous covers, Fenriz's candelabra scream echoing both Mayhem's classic album *Live In Leipzig* and, dare we say it, The Scream by fellow Norwegian Edvard Munch.

Fenriz created almost the entire album, handling all instruments and half the lyrics (the rest were created by Burzum's Count Grishnackh/Varg Vikernes, a move that angered many), the band having lost two of its members in as many albums. The band also sparked controversy by printing 'Norsk Arisk Black Metal' ('Norwegian Aryan black metal') on the back cover, and stating that anyone who criticised the record "should be thoroughly patronized for his obvious Jewish behaviour," actions Fenriz has since categorically denounced. But it was the last record released on Peaceville for many years. The band would be relaunched by Moonfog, the label of Satyricon mainman Satyr. Musically, *Transilvanian Hunger* stands as one of the most iconic albums in Darkthrone's back catalogue and for 90s black metal.

ACID BATH: PRESS. PRONG: ATLASICONS. DARKTHRONE: PRESS

In Flames in 1999: five years earlier, they changed metal forever

IN FLAMES
LUNAR STRAIN
An essential stepping stone on the path to Sweden's melo-death greatness



BY THE ONSET of 1994, the idea of injecting more melody into death metal wasn't that new. The previous year heralded albums such as *Heartwork* from Britain's Carcass, *Individual Thought Patterns* from Floridians Death, and *The Spectral Sorrows* from Sweden's Edge Of Sanity – all of which gave death metal a harmonic edge. The genre's intensity remained, but it was now coexisting with energised choruses and duelling, shredding guitars. This was death metal meets NWOBHM.

But the bands experimenting with these new sounds were separated by thousands of miles, with no close-knit geographical scene. In Flames helped change that. The quintet formed as teenagers in 1990, against the frosty backdrop of Gothenburg, Sweden. With a deep affinity for American thrash and Iron Maiden, they spent their nights playing gigs and their days drinking in parks, boomboxes in hand, alongside local contemporaries such as At The Gates and Dark Tranquillity.

On debut *Lunar Strain*, In Flames refined those loose blueprints provided by Carcass and Edge Of Sanity. They didn't just have swanky guitars and hooky refrains; they introduced ominous acoustic passages, speeding breakdowns and existential lyrics befitting of their gothic hometown. The influence of Maiden's twin guitar leads was strong, from powerful opener *Behind Space* to their namesake song *In Flames*. It was recorded at Studio Fredman, which would become the home of 'the Gothenburg sound', with vocals provided by Dark Tranquillity's Mikael Stanne. That band's previous singer, Anders Fridén, would go on to sing on In Flames' subsequent records.

Over the next few years, melo-death rose to greatness in Sweden and beyond. Albums such as At The Gates' seminal *Slaughter Of The Soul*, Dark Tranquillity's *The Gallery* and In Flames' own follow-up, *The Jester Race*, are timeless greats that followed in the slipstream of *Lunar Strain*.

CANNIBAL CORPSE
THE BLEEDING
The horror-obsessed Floridians flew the blood-soaked flag for metal, and waved it in grunge's face

BY THE TIME 1994 rolled around, the majority of the success underground metal built through the late 80s/early 90s had been wiped away by The Great Unwashed From The City Of Seattle. A remaining fraction of thrash and death metal warriors were fighting the good fight and putting out quality material, but a good chunk of the subterranean scene had been whittled away as metal became watered down and anaemic in the chase of grunge's success. With *The Bleeding*, Cannibal Corpse paid no heed to the Cobains, Cornells, Vedders, Staleys and other tortured artists of the world and just, er, tortured. The album's comparatively docile cover art may have initially led the public to believe they'd inexplicably joined in that chase, but once laser hit electronically coded piece of plastic, it became evident the band were not only defying the industry's popular sway, but had become one of the definitive acts – if not the defining act – of a genre surviving by the skin of its teeth. A couple of months earlier, they'd also had a boost from their appearance in Jim Carrey's *Ace Ventura: Pet Detective*.

The songs comprising the band's fourth album were triumphantly and brutally crushing, as they also nudged the goalposts back with technically adroit staccato riffing spells, vocals that flirted with grindcore's mid-range screech and a firm sense of groove – all wrapped into well-structured, rock-solid compositions. Titles such as *Fucked With A Knife, Stripped, Raped And Strangled* and *She Was Asking For It* would kickstart a SJW conniption fit were they released today, but it's a testament to the album's staying power that these tracks and many others remain in the band's present-day live set where young and old alike can be found banging heads and hollering along in salutation of, and participation in, Cannibal Corpse's blood-soaked world.

IN FLAMES: PRESS. CANNIBAL CORPSE: GETTY.

1994 ALBUMS

Troublegum-era Therapy? (left to right): Fyfe Ewing, Michael McKeegan, Andy Cairns

THE UNLIKELY

How did three short-haired punks from Ulster end up stealing the show at Monsters Of Rock '94? This is the story of Therapy?, and the album that defied all odds

WORDS: DAVE EVERLEY

THERAPY?

Troublegum

It wasn't until three songs into their set at the 1994 Monsters Of Rock festival that Therapy? frontman Andy Cairns realised his band weren't going to get crucified after all.

The Northern Irish trio's second full-length album, *Troublegum*, had been an out-of-the-box hit when it was released earlier in the year. This genius-level mash-up of alt-rock agitation and gold-plated pop nous had united the tribes in a way that no one – not even Nirvana – had done. Metalheads, punks, indie kids – everyone was swept up in its wake.

But Monsters Of Rock was something else. Download's illustrious forerunner was the last great bastion of metal at a time when the genre was under siege on all sides. For three short-haired 20-somethings from Ulster, sandwiched between Zakk Wylde's Pride & Glory and an in-the-ascendency Pantera, this was like stepping into a bear pit, where the bear has long hair, a Slayer T-shirt and some serious, lager-driven attitude.

"We'd been warned beforehand that this could go horrendously wrong," says Andy today. "We were this band from the noise-rock underground, our bassist wore glasses, we had short hair at a time when short hair was viewed with suspicion in the world of metal. We had visions of getting bottled off. With bottles of piss at that."

Therapy? didn't get drenched in urine. Quite the opposite – they pulled off a musical smash-and-grab that no one expected. It was all down to *Troublegum*.

Nothing in Therapy?'s background indicated that they would become one of the buzz bands of 1994. Formed five years earlier in provincial County Antrim by Andy, bassist Michael McKeegan and drummer Fyfe Ewing, their early releases had been full of abrasive noise-rock that owed a debt to US underground heroes The Jesus Lizard and Helmet. Even their name was awkward – that idiosyncratic question mark, added by Andy to fill space on the sleeve of their first single, added an element of WTF? to proceedings.

But the post-Nirvana gold-rush had prompted the major labels to snap up

PRESS

Therapy? threatened to get drunk and come round and fuck us up... and we loved them for it

any band with chafing guitars and a head full of self-loathing, and Therapy? had both. They were scooped up by A&M, who released their first full-length album, *Nurse*, in 1992. The first single for the label was *Teethgrinder*, a chorus-free slab of distorted clatter whose title was inspired by the long-term effects of taking speed. Amazingly, it reached the UK Top 30.

"People thought *Troublegum* had come out of nowhere, but all we'd known was hard work," says Andy. "We had done two world tours that year, so we'd put in the legwork."

Flush with this unforeseen success, various on-trend names were thrown about to produce the follow-up to *Nurse*, including *Nevermind* producer Butch Vig. "We didn't think we were ready for that," says Andy. "We were three kids from Northern Ireland from this punk background. It didn't feel right."

Therapy? instead elected to go with Chris Sheldon, a young British producer who'd previously worked with indie-rock icons Pixies. Chris asked to hear the new material the band had written. One of the new tracks was *Screamager*, a blast of brittle pop-punk melody and energy with a side-order of grunge-friendly self-loathing thrown in.

"We were playing it and Chris went, 'That's fantastic, what is it?'" says Andy. "We just went, 'Well, it's a bit too poppy for us.' But he said, 'Well, let's stick with it a while.'"

The producer's instincts were on the money. *Screamager* was released as the lead track on the *Shortsharpshock* EP in March 1993. It was meant to be little more than a stepping stone, a tip of the hat to Ulster punk figureheads Stiff Little Fingers and The Undertones. "It was supposed to be a one-off," says Andy. "After that we'd go back to making the kind of noise rock we were known for."

But something strange happened. Music magazines across the board from *Metal Hammer* to *NME* showered *Screamager* with praise. Weirder still, it began to get honest-to-god airplay on radio. With the wind in its sails, the *Shortsharpshock* EP entered the UK Top 10. Suddenly, Therapy? were on their way.

With *Troublegum* still a year off, Therapy? were on the horns of an existential dilemma. They had a bunch of new songs that veered closer to *Screamager* than they did the twisted racket of old. Should they continue to mine this unexpected seam of chart-friendly alt-rock or did they revert to malcontented type? They called a band meeting to thrash it out.

"We sat down and said, 'Look, this could go either way – we could get people on board and say all the things we always wanted to say, but it could go stupendously

Sofa, so good...

wrong and we'll be in all sorts of trouble,'" says Andy.

They opted to take the plunge – not out of a desire to become famous, but because the new songs retained enough edge to deflect any accusations of selling out.

The trio worked fast. The title *Troublegum* came early, mirroring the humour and angst of the songs they were writing. Underneath their shiny surfaces, new tracks such as *Nowhere, Die Laughing* and *Trigger Inside* bristled with alienation, twisted religious imagery and mangled psycho-sexual tension.

"I grew up as someone who wasn't exactly pin-up material, with weight and confidence issues, plus I had all this stuff I was carrying with me from Northern Ireland, the religious divide," says Andy. "All that was in there."

A string of singles and EPs built a head of steam. The kicker was *Nowhere*. Released in January 1994, this slice of buzzing pop-metal genius stands as one of the greatest singles of the era. Its repeated refrain – *'Going nowhere'* – struck a universal chord and *Nowhere* became the soundtrack to metal and indie club nights up and down the country.

Troublegum came out a few weeks later. It busted into the Top 5, its themes connecting with people irrespective of the subculture they belonged to. "It didn't matter whether they were metallers, goths, punks or people in baseball caps and Reeboks," says Andy. "When you're young, you're this mess of emotion. And it helped that they were great tunes."

Therapy? suddenly found themselves in demand. Dave Grohl and Blondie's Debbie Harry turned up at their gigs, they jammed onstage with Max Cavalera and on TV with Sting, they opened for Aerosmith and recorded a cover of *Iron Man* with Ozzy on guest vocals. The epic weirdness of it all was hammered home minutes after they left the stage following that victorious Monsters Of Rock set.

"I'd just come offstage and someone went, 'I hear you like the Marquis de Sade,'" says Andy. "I turned my head and it was Bruce Dickinson. I'd mentioned in a magazine that he was one of my favourite authors, and we sat and talked about him for 45 minutes. We didn't mention music once. Just the Marquis de Sade."

"I CAME OFFSTAGE AND THERE WAS BRUCE DICKINSON"

ANDY CAIRNS

Therapy? ended their brilliant, breathless year on a high. *Troublegum* cleaned up in music magazines' end-of-year polls – *Hammer* voted it the second-best album of '94, beaten only by Soundgarden's *Superunknown*. Their label, A&M, wanted more where that came from, squeezing as much juice from the lemon before the arrival of Oasis and Britpop.

"Their words were: 'Strike while the iron's hot,'" says Andy. "The last show was on something like December 23, and the day after Boxing Day we were in a studio in Lincolnshire with no songs, trying to work on the follow-up. We were exhausted."

Neither Britpop nor a hellish workload could crush Therapy's spirit. Twenty-five years on, Andy and Michael McKeegan continue to fly the flag (Fyfe Ewing departed in 1995). Such is *Troublegum*'s greatness that its imprint has marked the albums that followed to one degree or another. Where some bands tire of the records that made them famous, Andy Cairns has no such issues.

"I think it remains quite unsung in what it did for rock music and how it crossed over into other tribes," says Andy. "Killing off indulgent blues-based solos, having intelligent lyrics that dealt with issues of self-help and self-effacement – there weren't a lot of bands doing that in the metal sphere at the time. And it's got great songs on it!"

THERAPY?'S LATEST ALBUM, *CLEAVE*, IS OUT NOW VIA MARSHALL. FOR TOUR DATES, SEE P.109

PRESS

1994 ALBUMS

KYUSS

WELCOME TO SKY VALLEY

Born from generator parties in the California desert, the stoner rock pioneers recorded a classic album

IN THE SWELTERING depths of the Californian desert, something was stirring in the early 90s. A community of musicians, brought up on the stodgy sludge of classic Black Sabbath and the mind-warping psychedelia of The Doors, would routinely get together and have 'generator parties' in the heart of the desert. From that scene rose myriad stoner rock bands, but only one were the kings: Kyuss. Their legend was cemented on *Welcome To Sky Valley*, their third album and major label debut.

It's impossible to emphasise just how monolithic the guitar riffs of Josh Homme sounded back in 1994, but the fact that Kyuss still sound like the rumble of an earthquake and the power of a tornado happening at once should give some insight into why …*Sky Valley* connected so strongly. Whether it's the gut-battering groove of *Supa Scoopa And Mighty Scoop* (with arguably the best false ending in metal), or the dry and stabbing liquid punk rock of *100°*, *Welcome To Sky Valley* was manna from heaven for fans of more traditional-sounding rock at a time when metal was truly evolving. The fact that Kyuss not only managed to sound as exciting and contemporary as any other modern band, while leaning so heavily on the tropes of the past, but were clearly totally disinterested in playing the music business game, is why fans of the time still continue to speak about *Welcome To Sky Valley* in the sort of hushed tones reserved for gods and royalty. At this point in time, with their legend and legacy still intact, one listen to this should be enough to convince you that it's justified.

SATYRICON

DARK MEDIEVAL TIMES

The three Norwegians forged their own hallowed path through black metal's ruinous darkness

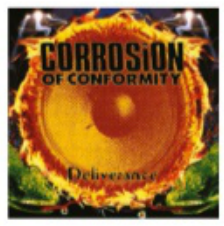
MAYHEM'S *DE MYSTERIIS* *Dom Sathanas* might rightly be considered black metal's foundational album, but the year of its release was no slouch in terms of raw material being forged elsewhere. There were seminal releases from Emperor, Darkthrone, Gorgoroth, Enslaved (two in their case) and Burzum for starters, not to mention numerous demos causing their own ripple effects throughout the scene. Having released a couple of demos themselves over the previous two years, Satyricon released debut *Dark Medieval Times* worldwide in 1994 (swiftly followed by *The Shadowthrone*). It remains an important record in its own right: a supremely grim compendium of numerous themes and motifs that were swirling around black metal, from frigid symphonic sweeps, to fascination with medieval (obviously) ruin and the hallowed inhumanity of nature, but its true historical stature is as a marker point for where black metal would go next.

As with Ulver, it's worth remembering that Satyricon's current boundary-resistant incarnation has its roots in feral ultra-traditionalism, but as the first release on frontman Satyr Wongraven's own Moonfog label, it was the ground zero for a new urban, futuristic take on black metal with which Moonfog became synonymous – a revolutionary aesthetic now as wedded to the scene as adamantium to Wolverine's bones.

CORROSION OF CONFORMITY

DELIVERANCE

The North Carolina hardcore crew stepped up their metal game for their major label debut



AFTER A DECADE of existing in the hardcore underground, COC finally arrived in the mainstream with their major label debut, *Deliverance*. Their success was built on crafting an album that eschewed the blast and rumble of their early punk rock days and instead perfected the more groove-laden, Sabbath-worshipping and classic metal vibes that had started to creep in on 1991's *Blind*.

Much of the credit goes to guitarist Pepper Keenan, who not only stepped up to the front musically, but also lent a wonderfully slack-jawed, Southern drawl to songs such as *Broken Man* on his first release fronting the band. It spawned two massive hit singles; the anthemic chug of *Clean My Wounds* and the rolling, hulking sway of *Albatross* turned Corrosion Of Conformity into one of the hottest bands in the world of metal at that time. Truthfully, though, there is far more to the album than those two songs – the greasy title track and the nearly-seven-minute-long stoner freak-out of *Pearls Before Swine* are as good as anything COC ever put their name to. *Deliverance* remains a thoroughly classic album.

KYUSS: GETTY. SATYRICON: PRESS. CORROSION OF CONFORMITY: GETTY.

THE GENIUS OF FRANK ZAPPA BY THOSE WHO KNEW HIM

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Out of Iron Maiden and facing a metal landscape that was evolving beyond recognition, it was time for Bruce Dickinson to sink or swim. In ’94, the legendary singer had his…

BALLS TO THE WALL

WORDS: DAVE LING

BRUCE DICKINSON

Balls To Picasso

Bruce Dickinson wasn’t contemplating becoming a full-time solo artist when he began work on *Balls To Picasso* in 1992, though by the time of the album’s troubled completion two years later, Iron Maiden’s swashbuckling lead singer knew that he had no alternative but to leave the band.

“I’d taken [my time with] Maiden as far as I could without having some mighty confrontation,” he told *Hammer* at the time. “You start invoking parallels about leading horses to water, and you cannot expect the whole band to abandon everything and do something completely different.”

By 1994, Bruce had recorded the album three times, each attempt distancing him further from Maiden’s well-defined, foot-on-the-monitor territory. A first effort, retaining Chris Tsangarides (who’d worked with Bruce on his 1990 solo debut, *Tattooed Millionaire*) and using London hard rockers Skin as his backing band was quickly scrapped for being nowhere near radical enough. The Seattle explosion had left metal in a tailspin, and the last thing Bruce sought was repeating himself with a carbon copy of Maiden; he had to challenge himself and his audience. An appreciation of the former Genesis singer Peter Gabriel compelled him to make *Balls To Picasso* deeper, darker and more progressive-sounding than anything to that point.

“I wanted to use percussion and different rhythms in a way that’s

GETTY

BRUCE DICKINSON

Bruce is a man who knows what he wants... it might just take a few attempts to nail it

never been done before," he explained. "What's been lacking in this form of music for so many years is groove. Things just became regimented into what's now the 'Maiden gallop' or the 'AC/DC plod'."

Next up, Bruce jetted to Los Angeles to work with Keith Olsen, but the Whitesnake/Ozzy Osbourne producer still couldn't capture the left-of-field ideas buzzing around in Bruce's head. "I tried to stay away from screaming metal… and it was *sort of* me, but I missed the guitars," he smiled.

With the Ozzy collaborator removed from the picture, perhaps out of desperation, Keith's engineer, Shay Baby, took over the console. And then a bolt of lightning struck. Having misread his diary and on a day that he shouldn't even have been at the studio, Bruce met producer and guitarist Roy Z, who was mixing some songs from his own band, Tribe Of Gypsies – an East LA troupe whose music mixed hard rock and funk with Latin flavours.

"When Roy played me the Tribe, I was blown away," explained Bruce. "They had great style, great songs. They were a real street band with awesome presence."

Roy was about to become a pivotal figure in the singer's life. After forging an instant connection, Bruce engaged Tribe Of Gypsies' bass player, Eddie Casillas, drummer David Ingraham and percussionist Doug van Booven to perform on what had to be one final stab at making the record, flying them in to work at London's Metropolis Studios.

"After scrapping the first two albums I went to the accountant to find out how many pennies were left in the piggy bank," Bruce revealed. "The answer was not many at all. I've got two kids and a third on the way, but you've got to do what you believe in, so bollocks."

It all amounted to one last throw of the dice, especially as Bruce was dead set on making music that pushed the envelope. Around him, management and record company were trying to exert pressure in favour of a more traditionally metal-orientated sound.

"Look," theorises Roy Z today, "if you're going to go to Vegas and put everything you have on a number, then pick your own number – don't use anyone else's."

Despite the above statement, Roy now admits that as far as possible he did try to push the music back towards more recognisable territory – "within the foundations of the situation I snuck in some metal here and there; when I could, I did. But the whole thing was a puzzle for me," he admits, referring to Bruce's strongly identified status at that time. "You don't change the colour of Coca Cola."

Yes, even Bruce Dickinson tried The Axl Look once upon a time...

"IT'S A WONDER WE WEREN'T FUCKING KILLED!"

BRUCE DICKINSON

But still, the external coercion continued. One morning Bruce awoke to find that somebody, presumably from Mercury Records, who would later drop the singer when the company downsized, had pushed a copy of the 1976 Aerosmith album *Rocks* under his hotel room door, along with a note saying: "Something like this would be good." The sheer impertinence made Bruce irate, but he and Roy Z harnessed the experience as a positive force to inspire one of the album's best songs – later a Top 40 single in the UK.

"We took the piss out of the situation with a song called *Shoot All The Clowns*, because those guys are clowns," Roy seethes. "Don't fucking tell us how to write."

What emerged was a fusion of drumming so precise it could have been mechanical and blisteringly heavy guitars. It's best summed up on its hypnotic, eerily inhuman opening track, *Cyclops*, which we can now consider a sinister warning of today's CCTV-monitored society.

"Oh, it's all real drummers, except for a very cheap drum machine which goes 'ping!' and chips away at the back of your brain," Bruce insisted back then. "There's not a sample or a keyboard on the record; it's all real."

Indeed, the robotic 'voice' featured on *Cyclops* belonged to Roy Z. "That's ▶

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Balls to the accountant: Bruce didn't care what it took to realise his vision

me talking through the pick-ups of my guitar," he reveals now.

"Three of the album's songs were written on a freeway with Roy playing a tape of riffs on the car stereo, and me screaming along," Bruce guffawed. "Roy was holding the tape recorder there… it was a wonder we weren't fucking killed."

The centrepiece of *Balls To Picasso* was its grandiose, six-minute epic, *Tears Of The Dragon*, the only survivor of each of the album's incarnations. Originally titled 'Pendragon's Day', it was retitled and rewritten about six times (according to Bruce) for the Keith Olsen sessions, and even recorded with a full orchestra before Roy persuaded him to allow one last stab at getting it right.

"The band had gone home but Roy suggested we get Dicki [Fliszar, Skin drummer] in for a day and Roy would do all the guitars and play bass," Bruce recalled. "And it turned out exactly how I envisaged it."

When *Hammer* spoke to Bruce back in '94, the singer wasn't aware of if Steve Harris had heard the finished record, laughing when this writer informed him that we had interviewed Maiden's bassist recently, and that he was

"STEVE FOUND MY GOING OFF DEEPLY WORRYING"

BRUCE DICKINSON

unwilling to be quoted on the subject. In fact, Steve seemed to agree with another writer who'd predicted that Bruce would make "a bad Peter Gabriel album." "Steve *did* hear the Olsen stuff," Bruce clarified, "and I think he found my going off and changing deeply worrying 'cos it disturbed the order of his universe. Steve does like things to obey the natural laws."

Balls… peaked at Number 21 in the UK chart. With hindsight, the delay in its making could now possibly be seen as fortuitous. After the apex of grunge, rock had its shackles off and artists could be seen to do anything they wanted; along with grunge's own survivors, the biggest rock records of '94 came from artists as varied as Nine Inch Nails to The Offspring. Today, Roy agrees that had *Balls…* emerged two years earlier, in the eye of the Seattle storm, such an impact would have been unlikely. "Yeah," he affirms, "sometimes timing is everything."

The downside of the situation was that Tribe Of Gypsies had their own record deal and were unable to work live with Bruce in the long term. So, with his next album, 1996's *Skunkworks*, Bruce poured kerosene on any last remnants of how he was viewed, hiring a young, fired-up bunch of musicians, bringing in Nirvana's producer Jack Endino, moving away from EMI to a smaller, more understanding label and even cutting his hair.

Roy Z would later work in similar circumstances with Rob Halford, who was out of Judas Priest when The Metal God invited him to produce his 2000 album, *Resurrection*, and with former Skid Row frontman Sebastian Bach, with whom he cut 2007's *Angel Down* (which included a guest spot from one Axl Rose).

"As an educated fan, I know what people want," Roy claims. "I may not make the best record of an artist's career but together we will make a record that catapults them back to where they belong. [For example], I hope that someday Sebastian will get back with Skid Row. And if he does, I probably won't get anything out of it. My role is to bring artists back to their roots; to remind them what the fans really love about them."

Sure enough, after two further Roy-produced albums (*Accident Of Birth* and *The Chemical Wedding*) Bruce returned to Maiden in 1999, where he has remained since. Roy would work with Bruce again, though, helping the singer make his 2005 solo outing, *Tyranny Of Souls*.

There is something Bruce regrets about the *Balls To Picasso* era, however. "All that I would change about the album is its title," Bruce told *Hammer* in 2005. "'Balls To Picasso' was some graffiti I saw on a lavatory wall…"

IRON MAIDEN TAKE THEIR LEGACY OF THE BEAST TOUR ACROSS THE US AND SOUTH AMERICA LATER THIS YEAR

GETTY

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1994

THE MUD, THE SWEAT, THE BEERS

Rather than channelling the hippy vibes of the history-making original, Woodstock ’94 embraced alt-rock and metal, with iconic performances from the likes of Nine Inch Nails and Metallica. It made for a clash of cultures that perfectly summed up metal’s maddest year

WORDS: JON WIEDERHORN

GETTY

As they prepared to take the stage to celebrate the 25th anniversary of the original Woodstock, Nine Inch Nails looked out from the covered backstage area at the sheets of rain pouring from the sky. The 200,000 fans waited on the mud-slick field, poised for the moshpit to erupt. Nine Inch Nails had played festivals before, but nothing on this level, and the guys – frontman Trent Reznor, guitarists Danny Lohner and Robin Finck, keyboardist James Woolley and drummer Chris Vrenna – were anxious and fidgety before showtime. The weather was irrelevant. It was time to sink or swim.

To ease the tension, James scooped up some mud and flicked it at one of his bandmates, who responded with a playful, “Fuck you,” and flung a larger handful back at the keyboardist. “It was like the beginning of a food fight,” Chris recalls. “One thing led to another, and the next thing we knew, everyone was covered from head to toe and we were all laughing for the first time of the day.”

Mud was even more omnipresent for Woodstock ’94 than it had been in 1969. At the back of the fairgrounds, fans danced in dirty-brown, knee-deep puddles. In the moshpits, they slid into one another as if they were fighting on ice skates. And other bands, especially Green Day, turned a potential disaster into a free-for-all party. When the crowd started throwing clumps of dirt at them, they embraced the chaos, flinging it back and triggering a giddy, chaotic mud fight. By the end, frontman Billie Joe Armstrong had dropped his pants and a security guard had accidentally clocked bassist Mike Dirnt in the mouth, knocking out some of his front teeth. The show did for Green Day what the mud costumes did for NIN; footage of the show was repeatedly splashed across MTV and three months later Green Day’s second album, *Dookie*, hit No.4 on the charts.

If there was a theme song for the festival, it’d be Primus’s *My Name is Mud*. But rather than trash the venue – as some fans did at Woodstock ’99 – or get mad and leave, the majority of crowd members revelled in it. Motivated by recreational pharmaceuticals, primal lust or a combination of both, they spent as much time frolicking in the mud at the back of the festival grounds as they did in the audience.

“There was shit going on back there that had nothing to do with what was going on by the stage,” recalls Blind Melon guitarist Rogers Stevens. “It was like *Lord Of The Flies*. You could vaguely hear music and there were giant mud puddles with naked people writhing around. Some of them were dancing, some were, uhh, doing other things.”

The line-up for Woodstock ’94 included alumni from Woodstock ’69 (Santana, Joe Cocker, Country Joe McDonald) and old-schoolers who didn’t play the original festival (Jimmy Cliff, Allman Brothers, Bob Dylan). But most of the highlights were newer, heavier and more contemporary bands. In addition to Nine Inch Nails and Green Day, the event featured Metallica, Aerosmith, Red Hot Chili Peppers, Jackyl, Porno For Pyros, the Rollins Band, Candlebox, Collective Soul, King’s X and Primus. Alice In Chains were originally booked but had to pull out since vocalist Layne Staley was in drug rehab. As a consolation, guitarist Jerry Cantrell took the stage at the end of Primus’s set to join a jam redolent of Led Zeppelin’s *Dazed And Confused*.

“What was going on [for the original Woodstock] was the best contemporary bands for 1969,” Metallica’s Lars

1994

Guns N' Roses turned down the offer of playing the festival, but Slash joined Paul Rodgers for four songs

Trent regretted trying out one of those Flat Tummy Tea packs

Ulrich told MTV before the group's monster set. "Now, we have the best contemporary bands for 1994. Music has evolved and society has evolved. Anyone expecting this to be a reprise of what went on 25 years ago should have their head examined."

In 1993, the Woodstock team rented out the 840-acre Winston Farm in Saugerties, New York. It was the location where Woodstock 1969 was scheduled to take place, before the owners got cold feet, forcing promoters to move it southwest to Max Yasgur's Dairy Farm. The line-up was announced on June 14, just two months before the concert. Some celebrated the news. Some didn't. Purists argued that the new acts – especially the heavier ones – tainted the legacy of the original Woodstock. Others complained that the $135 ticket price and corporate sponsorship (including abundant Woodstock merch and a pay-per-view simulcast) killed the organic, grass roots vibe of the 1969 event. Communities around Saugerties worried that local highways and roads weren't large enough to accommodate street traffic from 200,000 expected attendees.

"The mainstream press was negative from the start," recalls John Scher, then president of Polygram Diversified Entertainment, which co-promoted the event with Woodstock Ventures. "For months they said, 'There's gonna be riots and crime.' That didn't seem to stop anybody from buying tickets, but it made our lives pretty hellish."

Originally, promoters planned a two-day weekend festival across August 13-14, but added Friday to the schedule when they realised there was a surplus of groups that wanted to play, and that they could entertain campers who arrived early. Jackyl were the first metal band to play on Friday. Vocalist Jesse James Dupree took the stage in an Uncle Sam hat and a mirror shard jacket that weighed 40 pounds. He started by pouring whisky over the crowd. Then someone tossed a joint onstage and he sparked up, unconcerned about the area's strict drug laws. "They were being a little heavy-handed about drugs and alcohol, but how can you have a Woodstock without people smoking a little dope?" he asks. "We were having fun in the spirit of rock'n'roll and we woke everybody the fuck up because our adrenaline was spiking."

During Jackyl's nine-song set, Jesse James lit a gasoline-soaked stool on fire, then destroyed it with a chainsaw. Later, he picked up a 12-gauge goose gun rifle and fired into the air in tribute to late Woodstock legends Jimi Hendrix, Janis Joplin and Keith Moon. In the process, he accidentally slashed open his hand, smearing blood over himself. As a farewell gesture, he smashed his Gibson SG guitar and dropped his pants during *She Loves My Cock*. "They had a 40-foot-square screen behind me and I didn't want to miss the opportunity to have my penis be 10 feet long," he says. Woodstock had begun.

There was a chill in the air and dark clouds on the horizon as Blind Melon took the stage on Saturday afternoon – a day that saw one of the most mixed and muddled festival line-ups in history, everyone from Cypress Hill to The Cranberries to, ah, Salt-N-Pepa getting in on the action. Blind Melon vocalist Shannon Hoon seemed determined to make Woodstock '94 a long, strange trip. Before going onstage, he dropped acid, put a barrette in his hair and smeared on mascara. He just needed one more thing for his androgynous transformation…

"As we're going up, I turned around and Shannon was completely fuckin' naked in the crowd," Rogers Stevens recalls. "He told his girlfriend to take off her dress and give it to him. She did and he put it on. He looked so fuckin' cool."

The band's psychedelic, bluesy hard rock was mesmerising, and, thanks largely to Shannon, they looked as good as they sounded. The Woodstock site stayed dry until Blind Melon finished… then the skies opened. Regardless, the Rollins Band toughed it out, navigating puddles to deliver a scalding showcase of metallic post-hardcore tinged with blues, jazz and provocative comments.

"*Newsweek* [asked me], 'What do you think about Woodstock?'" Henry told the crowd. "And I said, 'I think it's the hippies cashing in on all the money they were too high to make in the 60s. Now, they look like Don Henley and they're cashing in. So make sure you get yer ya-yas out before you go home because they're gonna get the rest.'"

But festival officials were soon forced to scramble into action when more than 150,000 people without tickets knocked down the perimeter gates and stormed the grounds, turning the festival into a free show. "We thought the fences

GETTY

Awww it’s all peace, love, metal and debauchery

Porno For Pyros’ Perry Farrell is feelin’ blue

would hold up,” says John Scher. “We reinforced them, but when you’ve got 100,000-plus people trying to get in, there’s no such thing as a fence. On a certain level, it was great and we enjoyed it while it was happening, but we also knew it was a bit of a catastrophe. Right away, we thought, ‘How the hell are we gonna feed and get water and sanitary facilities for the extra 150,000 people?’ We had to shift gears and get more supplies in, which we did by late Saturday. And fortunately, we had more than enough room for everybody.”

Many of the trespassers arrived just in time for Nine Inch Nails, who took the stage looking like Marines who’d crawled through a field littered with IEDs. Following an instrumental intro, the band launched into *Terrible Lie* from first album *Pretty Hate Machine*. Mixing songs from their debut and their thrashy EP *Broken* with their then-recently released breakthrough *The Downward Spiral*, Nine Inch Nails brought the vitriol, counteracting the peace and love creed from Woodstock ’69. They closed with *Happiness In Slavery* and *Head Like A Hole*, during which Trent attacked and battered a keyboard at the back of the stage, which regurgitated echoes of agonising noise.

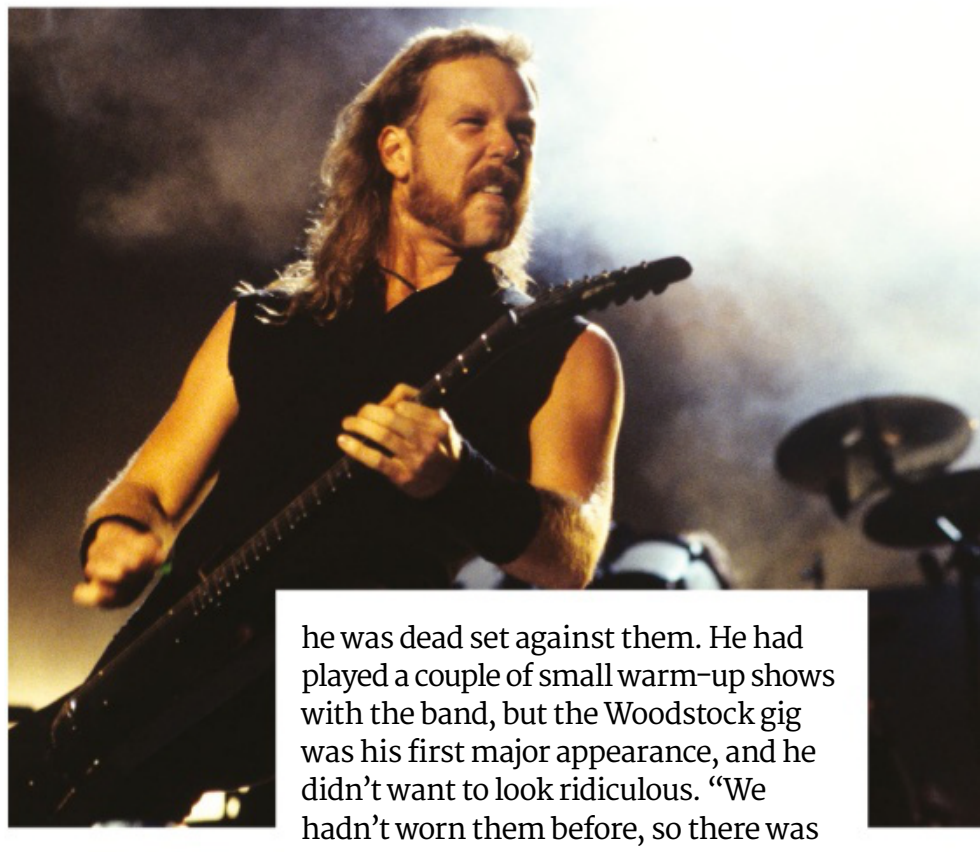
Only Metallica could follow that. They were still two years away from releasing *Load* and, in the burgeoning alternative nation, were in need of a credibility refresher. Woodstock ’94 did just that, exposing the band to fans who loved Green Day and Pearl Jam but might not yet have been won over by Metallica’s heavier, more explosive music. “Metallica went up and overpowered everybody with their stage set,” Jesse James says, adding that the band may have had an unfair advantage. “Nobody was supposed to bring more than one truck, and I think Metallica showed up with a couple of them, so they had a lot of bells and whistles. But they were great.”

Metallica burned through 15 songs in two hours, opening with their cover of Budgie’s *Breadfan*, then ensnaring the masses with a pyrotechnic barrage of hits, including *Master Of Puppets, For Whom The Bell Tolls* and *Enter Sandman*. During *One*, two minutes of machine-gun fire and flashpot bursts illustrated both the celebratory vibe of the event and the pre-millennial angst of the era.

After Metallica, Aerosmith took over for a post-midnight set, and the mood shifted from stark and explosive to fun-loving and oh-so sleazy. Aerosmith’s singer Steven Tyler and drummer Joey Kramer were in the audience at the original Woodstock, and though they were young, they never forgot what spreading peace and love – or was that getting a piece of spread love? – was all about. Despite the rain, the group were on fire, as Steven gyrated around with the mic stand dressed in a Mad Hatter’s outfit, bandanas tied to his sleeves.

While Sunday saw a set from Perry Farrell’s post-Jane’s Addiction band, Porno For Pyros, the most talked-about band were Red Hot Chili Peppers. They took the stage dressed as lit lightbulbs and powered through the funk-fuelled *Give It Away*, which they ended with the snippet of Black Sabbath’s *Sweet Leaf*.

Guitarist Dave Navarro thinks the costumes looked killer, but at the time he was dead set against them. He had played a couple of small warm-up shows with the band, but the Woodstock gig was his first major appearance, and he didn’t want to look ridiculous. “We hadn’t worn them before, so there was this element of the unknown,” he recalls. “The costumes took so long to make, they didn’t arrive until the day of the show. We put those things on our heads, and they were, like, 50 pounds each. It was nearly impossible to play.”



Papa Het: for whom the bells and whistles toll

Intensifying his first-show jitters was the knowledge that Perry Farrell, his former Jane’s Addiction bandmate, was in the audience. “Perry’s one of the coolest frontmen in rock and he’s about to watch his old guitar player come out dressed like a fuckin’ lightbulb,” says Dave. “That’s what was going through my head. But we only used the costumes for one song, then I got to run around for the rest of the show.”

For the encore of *The Power Of Equality*, the band returned to the stage dressed like Jimi Hendrix circa Woodstock 1969. “I was cool with that, because Hendrix is one of my all-time heroes,” Dave says. “If it wasn’t for him, I wouldn’t have become a guitar player.”

In the end, Woodstock ’94 was a youthful celebration that proved sex,

“NAKED PEOPLE WERE WRITHING AROUND IN GIANT MUD PUDDLES”

ROGERS STEVENS, BLIND MELON

GETTY

The Chilis' lightbulb costumes seemed like a bright idea at the time

"THE LIGHTBULB COSTUMES WERE SO HEAVY, IT WAS NEARLY IMPOSSIBLE TO PLAY"

DAVE NAVARRO

Aerosmith spread the peace and love. Mainly love, TBH...

drugs and rock'n'roll were still alive and well, and could be enjoyed without mindless acts of destruction – even with the inclusion of a bunch of hard rock and metal bands. "The audience was accepting of everybody," John says. "The same people that were digging Metallica and Henry Rollins were star-struck by Bob Dylan and Peter Gabriel."

Still, certain concert-goers were more passionate than others. About nine months after Woodstock '94, DJ Scott Shannon from New York radio station Z100 called John with some unexpected news. "He went, 'Hey man, what's going on?'" recalls John. "'I'm getting dozens of calls from people who are having babies and I think there's a good chance they were conceived at Woodstock!'"

Today, those kids are 24 years old, and some of them are probably making plans to attend the 50th Anniversary of Woodstock concert, which will take place this year in Watkins Glen, New York in August – though no established metal bands have yet been announced.

A glance at the tracklist of the Woodstock '94 live album is a reminder of how solid the event's line-up and performances were for metal fans. NIN's *Happiness in Slavery* won a 1995 Grammy award for Best Metal Performance and Metallica's *For Whom the Bell Tolls* was also nominated. In addition, tracks by the Rollins Band, Jackyl, Green Day, Red Hot Chili Peppers and Primus stood strong alongside classic rock numbers by Dylan, Peter Gabriel and Joe Cocker.

Like its predecessor, Woodstock '94 was a celebration of cultural diversity and musical innovation. Significantly, it was also a snapshot of a moment when metal groups and loud alternative bands influenced by metal, punk and classic rock brought the spirited sounds of the counterculture into the mainstream. Two days of rain, mud and overcrowding couldn't stop the (r)evolution.

1969 V 1994

They were 25 years apart, with different line-ups and locations, but how else did these two Woodstock festivals compare?

	1969	1994
Number of bands	33. The festival had a rotating stage, but it couldn't support the weight, and the wheels fell off, forcing artists to use one side.	60 across two stages. 11 additional artists played a late-night techno rave.
Price of a ticket	$18 and $24.	$135.
Capacity	500,000. Promoters sold 186,000 tickets in the pre-sale but, without a fence around the festival, thousands more got in.	350,000. 200,000 fans paid, and 150,000 more breached the perimeter fence.
Food	By mid-Saturday, small company Food For Love had run out of food, but only after jacking up their prices. Attendees retaliated for the price hike by burning down two of their stands. A group called Hog Farm Collective passed out thousands of cups of rice and granola for free. Others shared food they'd brought in, but many unsuspecting attendees were dosed by food containing LSD. On Sunday, the Air Force airlifted in 10,000 sandwiches.	There were plenty of food vendors on site, but they weren't expecting more than 200,000 people, so supplies quickly ran out after the fences went down. Organisers purchased more food from local merchants, who navigated gridlocked roads and arrived with the goods early Saturday evening.
Weather	Rain started at midnight on the first day. Following a weather delay on Sunday, headliner Hendrix took the stage at 8.30am on Monday morning, to a reduced crowd of approximately 30,000.	Rain started on the second day after Blind Melon played. Since the show was set up on two stages, the event stayed on schedule.
Deaths and injuries	There were 5,162 medical cases, including 797 bad acid trips. A woman fell from the stage scaffolding and broke her back, but survived. Two people died from drug overdoses and another died in a tractor accident; he was run over while inside a sleeping bag.	1,600 were treated for injuries in hospital and thousands more in the site's first aid tents. Two men died (one from a ruptured spleen, one from diabetes complications), and two women died on their way home when the driver fell asleep at the wheel.
Revenue	Woodstock Ventures went $1.3 million in debt. It took over a year for investors to recoup money from audio and video payments.	The organisers and bookers "didn't make a dime," says co-promoter John Scher.

GETTY

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THE REVIEWS

112
ROADBURN FESTIVAL
Heilung, Sleep and At The Gates raise the spirits and heal hearts in Tilburg

90
BARONESS
Savannah's kaleidoscopic riff-wielders hit new heights

90 ALBUM REVIEWS
98 GAAHLS WYRD
100 HEART OF A COWARD
101 MOTIONLESS IN WHITE
109 LIVE EVIL
112 LIVE REVIEWS
114 MANOWAR
114 DEVIN TOWNSEND
117 IN FLAMES
119 PAPA ROACH

EDITED BY: JONATHAN SELZER • PICTURE: ESTER SEGARRA

BARONESS

Gold & Grey

ABRAXAN HYMNS

Progressive sludge beloveds broaden their palette

IT'S BEEN NEARLY four years since Baroness unveiled what was then regarded as their magnum opus, *Purple*. Gestated during the band's recovery from a career-threatening bus crash, it saw frontman John Baizley and his new line-up raise their profiles with a harmonious fusion of acidic sludge and melodic, ambient beauty. Despite its oft-alien originality, *Purple* earned Baroness a Grammy nomination in 2017.

"A HEARTSTRING-PLUCKING PILGRIMAGE"

In following up all of that momentous acclaim, it initially seems that Baroness have opted for the *South Of Heaven* precedent: following an adored release by doing the exact opposite. While *Purple* – with its concise run-time and radio singles like *Shock Me* – had moments of succinctness to complement its barmier underpinnings, *Gold & Grey* is an hour-long, 17-track odyssey. So, on paper, it appears that it has more in common with 2012's *Yellow & Green*, Baroness's sprawling prog rock double album, than anything else. However, the opening moments pick up right where the band most recently left off. *Front Toward Enemy* roars to life with a twisted and visceral hard rock riff, followed by the harmonised choruses of *I'm Already Gone*, which recalls such recent glories as *Try To Disappear*. The primary change thus far is newcomer Gina Gleason, whose luscious, higher-pitched backing vocals are the perfect counterpoint for Baizley's low, Southern rasp.

Increasingly avant-garde overtones begin to be felt in the meandering balladry of *Tourniquet*, which evokes more memories of *Yellow & Green* with its sombre delivery. Sorrowful acoustic guitars gradually evolve into fuzzy, sledgehammer-heavy riffs, aided in their metamorphosis by satisfyingly chopping basslines. The subsequent shred-a-thon, *Throw Me An Anchor*, should feel like

Baroness: for the glory of the hue

a dynamic mess, yet the interlude, *Anchor's Lament* – as with every other short instrumental here – stands as a masterful transition, providing a minute of escalating symphonies that bridges any gaps. It's these details that elevate the album to the upper echelon of Baroness's entire career to date, making *Gold & Grey* feel like an expertly executed journey where every stop is quintessential.

Thereafter, the nihilistic one-two of *Emmett: Radiating Light* and *Cold-Blooded Angels* are the ultimate climax to *Gold & Grey*'s more overtly bleak tangent. Both boast poetic lyricism and eclectic instrumentation from triangles to bells, worthy of comparisons to genre-less powerhouses as far-flung as the Beatles' *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band*.

Likely to the relief of some, *Gold & Grey* caps itself off with a full-blooded return to guttural rock'n'roll. *Broken Halo* hacks away with Mastodon-style guitar chords before *Borderlines* steals the show as a joyous romp of duelling vocalists and rhythmic swagger.

After such a positive jolt, it's astounding when you recall the pessimistic lows that Baroness were traversing not half an hour beforehand. To call *Gold & Grey* a heartstring-plucking pilgrimage would be no exaggeration, as these four musicians demonstrate that *Purple* was not their be-all and end-all, it was merely a stepping stone to the real masterpiece looming around the corner.

FOR FANS OF: **Elder, Mastodon, Hawkwind**

MATT MILLS

ABNORMALITY
Sociopathic Constructs
METAL BLADE

New England's tech-death brutalists revel in the chaos

2016's *Mechanisms Of Omniscience* highlighted Abnormality's ability to flex cutting-edge technicality while still sounding as nasty and scary as possible. *Sociopathic Constructs* sees both of these pillars built even higher, with a clinical rhythm section creating the perfect maelstrom for thuggish riffs and Mallika Sundaramurthy's bestial vocals. While the murderous frenzy of *Kakistocracy* and *A Seething Perversion* is akin to being ripped apart as a building collapses around you, there's room for monolithic groove and eerie leads on *Dying Breed* and the slugfest of *A Catastrophic And Catalyzing Event*. With drummer and lyricist Jay Blaisdell stating that '*the world is a fucking mental hospital,*' *...Constructs* is the ideal soundtrack.

FOR FANS OF: **Venom Prison, Cryptopsy, Origin**

ADAM REES

ASEETHE
Throes
THRILL JOCKEY

Doom-laden Iowans extend their artful edge

Aseethe have been plying their trade for over a decade, releasing a slew of artefacts across numerous DIY hardcore imprints before making the leap to avant powerhouse Thrill Jockey. That the band can comfortably exist in both realms is testament to a thoughtful approach that's as informed by drone, noise and film soundtracks as the first three Eyehategod albums. *Throes* continues this unpredictable journey, with the vast craggy riffs and ruptured roars offset by moments of clear-eyed spaciousness and, on *No Realm*, a nod to 90s post-hardcore. While they might not be teetering on the same bleeding edge as The Body, it's wilfully difficult and enjoyably *different* – both traits to be admired in this current blighted era.

FOR FANS OF: **Vile Creature, Noothgrush, Sumac**

ALEX DELLER

AVATAR
The King Live In Paris
CENTURY MEDIA

Theatrical Swedish oddballs roll up in Paris for a regal romp

The metal circus is officially back in town. Recorded during Download Festival France last year, *The King Live In Paris* boasts 11 songs from across Avatar's discography, with plenty of between-song batshit interaction courtesy of frontman Johannes Eckerström. Exploding in a blaze of NWOBHM-inspired riffery offset by melodic bombast, the kings of theatrical dramatics unleash fan favourites such as *A Statue Of The King*, blues-soaked stomper *Let It Burn* and *Hail The Apocalypse* upon the Parisian masses. Eckerström is on fine form throughout, channelling his inner Rob Halford as he veers wildly between soaring histrionics and throat-ripping screams. Gloriously unhinged.

FOR FANS OF: Amon Amarth, Children Of Bodom, Helloween

SOPHIE MAUGHAN

RIP Caleb Scofield (far left): 1978–2018

CAVE IN
Final Transmission
HYDRA HEAD

Progressive riff-wielders bow out in honour of Caleb Scofield

WHEN CAVE IN'S Caleb Scofield died in an auto accident on March 28, 2018 he essentially took the band with him. Usually, bass players are the butt of jokes, but as any musician knows, when you subtract low-end thunder from the equation, it's instantly noticeable. With his wiry rhythmic sense and monumental tone, Scofield was not only essential to Cave In, but he maintained ties to the heavier side of the spectrum when he enthusiastically stepped up to the mic to perform the raucous metallic hardcore of their older material during a phase in which vocalist/guitarist Stephen Brodsky was shying away from the past.

The eight songs proper here were sourced from pre-production demos for what was intended to be their first album since 2011's *White Silence*. As such, the sound quality gets a pass, and where gripes might exist about *Night Crawler* being too raw and *Led To The Wolves* being too muddy, the former's arching collision of thrash and indie rock and the latter's mountainous mathematical clobber see great songs cutting through the clutter.

The title track opens the album with a literal voice from the grave: a skeleton riff idea recorded by Scofield, complete with him singing the melody. *All Illusion* continues that haunting methodology with prominent bass tying together a molten spin on proggy, melodic space rock pushed into earworm status by Brodsky's vocals. The style they carved out on 2000's *Jupiter* onward continues a forward press with the minor-key descents in *Shake My Blood* crawling creepily into sweet darkness (or dark sweetness) and *Winter Window*'s combining of *Big Riff*-like bends and skyscraping note plucking.

As you might expect given the circumstances, segments of *Final Transmission* sound incomplete. However, that this is indeed the last time the boundary-scrubbing quartet will be heard together, and that sales proceeds are going directly to Caleb's widow and their two children, are reasons enough to invest in this tragic document.

FOR FANS OF: Failure, Isis, Quicksand

CONNIE GORDON

BETHLEHEM
Lebe Dich Leer
PROPHECY PRODUCTIONS

Masterful misery from Germany's dark metal pioneers

When the annals of extreme metal are written, Jürgen Bartsch's Bethlehem must be championed for their bloodletting contributions to black/death/doom metal. Pioneers of the depressive/suicidal sub-subgenre since the early 90s, the band's spirit-crippling nature remains despite many line-up changes.
This new album acts as a companion piece to 2016's self-titled release, with darkwave and post-punk influences further creeping in from the shadows and Darkened Nocturn Slaughtercult's Onielar conducting her second chilling vocal exorcism. Sit in ceremonial silence and play both albums back to back, and you'll undoubtedly succumb to the fear and negativity that will crawl up your spine before consuming you whole.

FOR FANS OF: Lifelover, Rope Sect, Shining (Swe)

DEAN BROWN

BLACK MOUNTAIN
Destroyer
JAGJAGUWAR

Psych rock wunderkids take another exhilarating ride

These critically acclaimed Canadian psychedelic rockers continue to reach for the stars and journey into the human mind on their fifth album. Opening track *Future Shade* embarks on a musical journey with its wild fuzzed guitar riffs and *Sympathy For The Devil* levels of vocal interplay. The band's signature space rock takes a back seat at times but is still apparent in the robot-inflected vocals of *Horns Arising* or the John Carpenter-tinged ethereal coldness of *Closer To The Edge* and its synthesisers. Black Mountain sound like they're pilfering their own record collections for inspiration but giving it their own seditious infectious spin.

FOR FANS OF: QOTSA, Clutch, Fu Manchu

CRAIG HUNTLEY

CALL OF THE VOID
Buried In Light
TRANSLATION LOSS

Colorado four-piece find new growth beside the grindcore tracks

This Colorado quartet were never an outright grindcore band, even if their two previous albums leaned heavily on the genre's tenets. *Buried In Light* maintains a red-lining velocity, but deepens the exploratory churn and mid-paced excursions, with the result being a scathingly dynamic devastation. *Almighty Pig* and *Disutility* inject infectious galloping into rocket-paced thrashcore, *Suck Me Dry* puts post-metal on a tribal pogo stick, Celtic Frost, Big Black and Brutal Truth are absorbed into each other in *Living Ruins* and the title track teeters on the edge of rousing, stein-hoisting pub anthem. Mind you, that's in the planet's most miserable boozer where everyone may know your name, but they also enjoy beating you with cricket bats.

FOR FANS OF: Pig Destroyer, Trap Them, Napalm Death

CONNIE GORDON

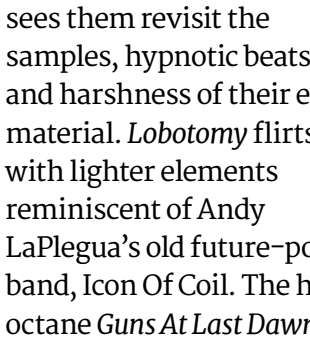
COMBICHRIST
One Fire
OUT OF LINE

US-based industrialists broaden their manufacturing base

Since 2010's *Making Monsters*, the former dark industrial darlings have gone further down the metal spiral, but *One Fire* sees them revisit the samples, hypnotic beats and harshness of their early material. *Lobotomy* flirts with lighter elements reminiscent of Andy LaPlegua's old future-pop band, Icon Of Coil. The hi-octane *Guns At Last Dawn*, sounds like a mash-up of 90s NIN, Ministry and Fear Factory, and includes special guest Burton C Bell. More surprises lurk on the faithful cover of Dead Kennedys' punk classic, *California Über Alles*, the reverb-heavy *The Other* with its Bowie-esque vocals, and a dramatic dark cabaret reworking of *Underworld: Awakening*'s *Bottle Of Pain*. *One Fire* can feel like a rarities collection at times, but its diversity propels Combichrist to a new level.

FOR FANS OF: Fear Factory, Ministry, Nine Inch Nails

NATASHA SCHARF



DEFYING DECAY
Metamorphosis
SELF-RELEASED

Thai metallers wrest themselves from their nu metal gravity well

Described as "an eclectic mix of cultures and classical training," these Thai misfits are certainly competent when it comes to quality musicianship. The issue is the five-piece's lack of individuality; they don't so much wear their influences on their sleeves as batter you senseless with them – particularly during the record's first half. Exploding amongst a barrage of blastbeats, skittering electronica and pinched harmonics, *The Repentance* is overly reminiscent of Slipknot's debut while the downtuned *Existence Of Extinction* and nu metal/industrial stomp of *Dominion* sees vocalist 'Jay' Poom Euarchukiati channelling his inner Jonathan Davis. Déjà vu is negated via the serenity of piano-led *Crimson Butterfly* alongside the cinematic sprawl of melancholic slow-burner *Ghost*, and, by the album's conclusion, emotive soundscapes, erratic time signatures and dark, knuckle-dragging djent reaffirm the Bangkok natives' ability to forge their own sonic path.

FOR FANS OF: Korn, Deftones, Periphery

SOPHIE MAUGHAN

DIAMOND HEAD
The Coffin Train
SILVER LINING MUSIC

Metallica-endorsed NWOBHM gods crank up their return to glory

The arrival of vocalist Rasmus Bom Andersen made a huge difference to Diamond Head. 2016's self-titled album was a massive return to form *and* a welcome return to a more recognisable sound after several years of alt-rock experiments that never really suited Brian Tatler's legendary crew. It's an audibly reinvigorated band, with Rasmus as a charismatic focal point, that pummels its way through furious opening track, *Belly Of The Beast*. Infused with the spirit of those absurdly influential early records and yet still with enough contemporary bite to side-step the nostalgia circuit, songs like *The Messenger* and *Death By Design* get the balance between balls-out metal and elegant songwriting just right. But it's the singer's soulful and gritty but wonderfully timeless voice that seals the deal, ensuring that Diamond Head have genuinely never sounded better.

FOR FANS OF: Metallica, Iron Maiden, Orange Goblin

DOM LAWSON

DISTANT
Tyrannotophia
UNIQUE LEADER

Dutch deathcore brutalists keep aiming for the same spot

Opting for a shock and awe approach rather than a deep and expandive soundscape, *Tyrannotophia*, the debut full-length from Dutch deathcore quintet Distant, is not for the faint of heart. Opener *The Blind Prophecy* sets a menacing tone right from the get-go and the intensity rarely lets up throughout as the 11 slabs on offer refuse you any opportunity to come up for air. It's a punishing listen as the beatdown-driven *Hollow Eyes* has enough power to level a city and Alex Grnja puts in a solid shift with a range of guttural lows and ear-piercing shrieks. And yet, for all the ferocity, repetition rears its head and dampens any lasting impact. If you like your metal as brutal as it gets, you'll find a lot to like here but for those who want something deeper, you'll find *Tyrannotophia* has a limited lifespan.

FOR FANS OF: Ingested, Black Tongue, Vulvodynia

JAMES WEAVER

Death Angel cover all bases of thrash

DEATH ANGEL
Humanicide
NUCLEAR BLAST

Unbreakable Bay Area diehards keep the pit spinning

IT WOULD BE impossible to dislike Death Angel, even if we weren't all in desperate need of some vigorous cheering up. The audacious whippersnappers of thrash metal's first wave, they sustained their cult status throughout lean periods, lengthy hiatuses and into a 21st century that, as it turned out, was still pretty fucking enthusiastic about thrash. The feeling was clearly mutual, too, because *Humanicide* is the San Francisco quintet's sixth studio album since reforming in earnest in 2001 and it's about as brutally uplifting and joyously full-throttle as anything you will hear this year.

Thrash has always been a pliable thing, and Death Angel cover a huge amount of ground here, veering from the classic harmonies and textbook Bay Area cut'n'thrust of the opening title track to the flat-out singalong skatecore of *I Came For Blood* and *Divine Defector*'s angular death metal attack.

All of the band's recent albums have run along similar lines, of course, and all have had their fair share of thrilling moments, but *Humanicide* simply feels more intense, exuberant and consistent than its predecessors. Melodramatic and macabre, *Aggressor* is a more adventurous and dynamic take on Death Angel's high-energy formula, with a trippy instrumental mid-section that nods to reawakened progressive urges. Elsewhere, *Alive And Screaming* and *The Pack* are unapologetic thrash metal chin-whackers, replete with gang vocals and a tangible air of impending moshpit carnage; *Revelation Song* surfs on a thudding disco beat, all jagged syncopation and 80s bass throb, as singer Mark Osegueda once again demonstrates his versatility and range with a rasping Geoff Tate-like vocal.

Both an exercise in nailing the basics and a confident step forward, *Humanicide* is what happens when a great band really, really love what they do. And what Death Angel do is thrash like absolute fucking madmen.

FOR FANS OF: Testament, Anthrax, Trivium

DOM LAWSON

Perry Farrell: alt-rock sharp suiter

PERRY FARRELL
Kind Heaven
BMG

Jane's Addiction's mercurial frontman makes a wide-ranging return

AMONG THE SPLASHY, game-changing artists that emerged in the late 80s and early 90s, few frontmen proved as legitimately daring or notorious as Perry Farrell. His band, Jane's Addiction, would spearhead the 90s alt-rock movement with an enthralling mash-up of pop, funk and metal, alongside Farrell's intensely gritty and provocative lyricism. Amid that band's often halting trajectory, he additionally formed Porno For Pyros and Satellite Party before launching his solo career in 2001. Lollapalooza, which he co-founded in 1991, remains one of the biggest music festivals in the US.

Kind Heaven sees Farrell reaffirm his commitment to genre alchemy, synthesising a prismatic array of styles into nine distinct tracks that unfold with bold, cinematic flourish. Weirdly, opening track *(red, white and blue) Cheerfulness* ranks among the album's weakest – a sugary dose of pure, uncut pop that feels destined for a zany travel montage in a college road trip movie. It's on the heavier fare where we see Farrell hit his stride, particularly on *Machine Girl* and the excellent *Pirate Punk Politician* – a propulsive electro-banger surging with slamming riffs and glistening flecks of electronica. Indulging his enduring art-house sensibilities, *More Than I Could Bear* recalls the imperious regal splendour of Led Zep's *Kashmir*, while *Snakes Have Many Hips* showcases his more grandiose ambitions. Brimming with theatrical overtures, it features a driving jazz piano and a dramatic orchestral backdrop that feels fresh and compelling, while avoiding indulgent excess.

Thematically, Farrell returns to his preferred topics – sex, politics and spirituality – turning in some of his most thoughtful lyrics yet. The result is a richly nuanced and memorable collection with no shortage of hits. In fact, well-balanced and exceptionally produced, *Kind Heaven* squarely establishes that, 32 years after Jane's Addiction's groundbreaking debut, Perry Farrell remains a vital creative force in today's scene.

FOR FANS OF: Black Rebel Motorcycle Club, Moby, The Dead Weather

JOE DALY

DREADNOUGHT
Emergence
PROFOUND LORE

Blackened, multi-instrumental musings from the Colorado plains

Dreadnought's fourth full-length sees the quartet build upon their mellifluous blend of doom, prog and black metal. Drummer/saxophonist Jordan Clancy's ceaseless drum fills bring Brann Dailor to mind on *Besieged*, an undulating rhythmic sea upon which Kelly Schilling's vocals toss and turn. *Pestilent* adds compelling guitar hooks to the mix, Schilling's flute trading off Clancy's sax to unique effect. *Tempered* brings bassist/mandolin player Kevin Handlon to the fore, Lauren Viera's synth stabs and solos diving deep amidst a knotted rhythm section, building to coruscating blasts. *Emergence* is so airy it can become nebulous, but it nevertheless showcases Dreadnought's engrossingly complex potential.

FOR FANS OF: Mastodon, Kylesa, The Atlas Moth

TOM O'BOYLE

EARTH
Full Upon Her Burning Lips
SARGENT HOUSE

Seattle's drone rock pioneer refines his road to redemption

The last 15 years of Dylan Carlson's difficult journey have been redemptive for him and rewarding for us, and this latest slice of parched Americana sees the lines between his solo material and his Earth work becoming ever more blurred. While the rambling, drawn-out compositions are similar in tone to 2014's *Primitive And Deadly*, the spartan sound is in marked contrast to the recent lusher, more layered approach. Skeins of wiry guitar twist and twine while Adrienne Davies' tactful drumming provides a subtle, flickering foil, making for a deft piece that divides its time between meditative evocations of vast, featureless open space and quietly intense heat mirages.

FOR FANS OF: Om, Lungfish, Grails

ALEX DELLER

ENTHRONED
Cold Black Suns
SEASON OF MIST

Belgian black metallers add some new armaments

Many artists have released their finest work during their early years, but for Belgium's Enthroned the opposite rings true. Once second-wave black metal traditionalists, Enthroned's music has become more multifaceted over time. Their 11th LP showcases the nuances of their evolving sound in full effect: the further integration of coruscating industrial and post-metal augments the intrinsic BM austerity. Pummelling martial beats enhance the monochrome riffs, while unnerving disquiet heightens the impact of the band's relentless passages. Consequentially, standout tracks such as *Hosanna Satana* and *Vapula Omega* rival *Rebel Extravaganza*-era Satyricon and the menacingly powerful masterworks of Triptykon.

FOR FANS OF: Emptiness, Mord'A'Stigmata, Mephorash

DEAN BROWN

ENTOMBED
Live Clandestine
THREEMAN RECORDINGS

Sweden's estranged death'n'roll originals celebrate a quarter century

While the chances of a full Entombed reunion remain as likely as Theresa May joining Rammstein, fans were given a little hope when some of the original band reunited for a show in Sweden in November 2016 to play the seminal *Clandestine* in its entirety on its 25th anniversary. Featuring Nicke Andersson, Uffe Cederlund and Alex Hellid alongside vocalist Robert Andersson and bassist Edvin Aftonfalk, an official audio recording has finally been released, and although it won't quite sate those dying to see the legends in the flesh, it will satisfy both completists and the curious. Serving as a reminder of how evergreen the opus is, the likes of the thunderous *Evilyn* and the bullish *Blessed Be* are as sharp as their beloved Wolverine's claws.

FOR FANS OF: At The Gates, Unleashed, Obituary

EDWIN MCFEE

HARBINGER
Compelled To Suffer
SELF-RELEASED

UK tech-metal newcomers find some personality outside the pen

Harbinger's debut full-length reveals a band determined to evolve. Refining its tech-metal elements and adding even more heft, *Compelled To Suffer* edges into deathcore, particularly in the frequent employ of thuggish beatdowns. Unfortunately, that means there are even more clichéd pitfalls to avoid than before, and frequent slips into cookie-cutter territories detract from an otherwise confident stride into new avenues. The passion that feeds into this record, however, is readily apparent. Deft guitarwork adds a sense of imperiousness that elevates the band above the flotsam, while massive choruses continue to prove the difference between the also-rans and true contenders; *Descendants*, *Desperation Dear* and *The Red Flower* all admirably show what Harbinger can do once they kick away the framework.

FOR FANS OF: Malevolence, Periphery, Sylosis

RICH HOBSON

KULL
Exile
BLACK LION

Symphonic legends get a new wrecking bal(l) rolling

You probably have to be a massive Bal-Sagoth fan to appreciate how exciting the arrival of Kull is. But it definitely fucking is. Thirteen years have passed since the legendary British band released *The Chthonic Chronicles* and it's beyond thrilling to hear that uniquely deranged symphonic black metal squall erupting again, albeit without frontman Byron Roberts. *Exile* contains the music that brothers Chris and Jonny Maudling (guitar and keys respectively) had written for a proposed seventh Bal-Sagoth album, and it's all utterly magnificent. The recruitment of Dyscaphia guitarist Tarkan as vocalist has helped to take these vivid flights of cross-dimensional fancy into darker territory, but the interstellar grandiloquence of old is here in plentiful supply too. Sonically immaculate but nasty as hell, the likes of *By Lucifers Crown* (sic) and *A Summoning To War* deserve to be heard throughout the cosmos.

FOR FANS OF: Bal-Sagoth, Dimmu Borgir, Mysticum

DOM LAWSON

KUROKUMA
Sheffield's Best Metal Bands Vol. 1
OFF ME NUT

Steel City nihilists turn their sights on Jamiroquai

Kurokuma make music that's dirtier than Sheffield Corporation's toilets. The Steel City trio's third release may lack the focused groove of previous efforts, but *Vol. 1* still delivers doom from the doldrums and then some. *RVN* lumbers through melancholic riffs and lo-fi, almost black metal shrieks, overtaking spooky keyboards playing out like Electric Hellfire Club covering Slabdragger. A grinding, Godflesh-lite instrumental in the form of *Wasp Nest* serves as both the mini-album's midriff and finale, the latter as a danceable remix. This is but a vessel, a smorgasbord wherein the root of Kurokuma's charm hides: their ability to just make a racket. *Vol. 1* conjures a decent atmosphere, all hooked around an 11-minute defilement of Jamiroquai's *Deeper Underground* (yeah, the *Godzilla OST* one). It's horrible: loose, obnoxiously dense doom metal, bearing no semblance to the original. And perhaps that's the point.

FOR FANS OF: Electric Wizard, Conan, Crowbar

ALEC CHILLINGWORTH

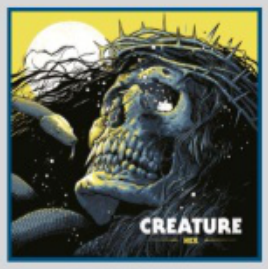
SMALL MERCIES

Where EP is short for 'Epic Potential'

ALPHA WOLF
Fault
SHARPTONE

These Aussies' latest six-track sounds like it's being broadcast from the darkest bowels of hell. Murderous riffs and slam-worthy grooves keep you on tenterhooks as the five-piece redefine metalcore via a nihilistic soundtrack.

SOPHIE MAUGHAN



CREATURE
Hex
GREY GHOST

Holy hell, this is a gripping debut. Invigorating, intelligent, and raw, this eight-minute juggernaut of churning energy and dynamic, scathing vocals leaves little in its wake but a breathless craving for the next EP in the trilogy.

NIK YOUNG

CURSED EARTH
The Deathbed Sessions
UNFD

Following their *Cycles Of Grief* EPs, Cursed Earth are continuing to create emotionally harrowing hardcore to sumptuous effect. Whether it's with the rage of *Fear* or *Deathbed*'s slow-building desolation, this is pure catharsis.

MATT MILLS

DOOL
Love Like Blood
PROPHECY PRODUCTIONS

Correctly declaring it one of the greatest songs ever written, Dool have taken Killing Joke's 1995 masterful hit anthem and made it woozy and weird. It still rules. The two live tracks from last year's Rock Hard Festival are a neat bonus.

DOM LAWSON

PLEIADES
All At Your Mercy
AWAL

These Manchester post-metallers masterfully shift dynamics on their second EP. Pleiades' secret weapon is vocalist Andy Calderbank, who can switch from melodic tranquil cleans to searing, apoplectic rage in a heartbeat.

REMFRY DEDMAN

VADER
Thy Messenger EP
NUCLEAR BLAST

Since 1983, Vader have led a non-stop death metal charge. *Thy Messenger* comes in advance of the Poles' 15th album and shows that nothing, not even creaky middle-age bones and a questionable Priest cover, can slow 'em down.

CONNIE GORDON

Firespawn: Swedeath legends at work

FIRESPAWN
Abominate
CENTURY MEDIA

Swedish death masters make a foray outside the frame

THEY MAY COUNT members of Entombed, Necrophobic and Unleashed amongst their ranks, but simply running through a checklist of old-school Swedish death metal clichés is the furthest thing from Firespawn's collective mind on album number three. Following their 2015 debut, *Shadow Realms*, and 2017's *The Reprobate*, *Abominate* finds their crisp, contemporary take on death metal coming into sharper focus, recalling the brash, brutish bludgeoning of latter-day Cannibal Corpse, the bombastic, arena-filling melodic refrains of Arch Enemy and, perhaps most frequently, vintage Morbid Angel; the twisting, Azagthoth-ian chugging on *Godlessness* and the title track could have come straight from *Domination*.

Abominate boasts the best production Firespawn have had so far too, with vocalist L-G Petrov sounding more guttural and authoritative than he has done in years and drummer Matte Modin's blistering double kick rolls bursting through the mix like crackling thunder. The guitars possess a thick, meaty and visceral presence throughout, but especially on the menacing, droning tremolo-picked riffery of *The Great One*, a song that marries eerie, cavernous dissonance with an anthemic bounce, like Portal attempting to slip through a gateway into some Lovecraftian nightmare, but taking a wrong turn and stumbling onstage during an Amon Amarth festival set instead.

Not every song here has as much personality, however, with the straightforward, blasting *Heathen Blood* feeling a tad rote by comparison, but when *Abominate* hits the spot, it hits hard. It's not reinventing the wheel by any means, but you can tell these grizzled veterans are having fun tip-toeing outside their comfort zones and trying out ideas that, while not exactly revolutionary, probably wouldn't fly in their other, more established projects. If you're in the market for some crushing, no-nonsense modern death metal, you could certainly do a lot worse than this.

FOR FANS OF: Morbid Angel, Bloodbath, Vomitory

KEZ WHELAN

LORD DYING
Mysterium Tremendum
EONE

Portland riff-wielders turn their focus to human finality

Tibetan philosophers have noted that the one fate guaranteed to every human – death – is the very subject they spend the most time avoiding. Leave it to Portland's Lord Dying to confront the topic head on with a pulverising, 11-track meditation on death and mortality. Though they continue to draw from prog, psych and death metal, *Mysterium Tremendum* sees the quartet exploring softer melodic textures on tracks like *Lacerated Psyche,* but suffers no lack of might; belters like *Near The End Of The Curling Worm* deliver a fiery payload of skull-flattening riffs. The contrasting elements play against each other in a way that brings a sturdy balance to the material. Immersive and deeply evocative, this is the work of a band operating at the absolute top of their game.

FOR FANS OF: Baroness, Mastodon, Corrosion Of Conformity

JOE DALY

DUFF McKAGAN
Tenderness
UNIVERSAL

Guns N' Roses bassist reveals his soft side and a hard edge

When the Use Your Illusion tour ended, GN'R fans clamoured for a follow-up album but instead received a series of solo releases by its members. A quarter-century later, it's déjà vu all over again as bassist Duff McKagan becomes the third member to issue a solo album in recent months – and *Tenderness* is the biggest musical left-turn yet: a pensive and often plaintive hybrid of Americana, 70s AM radio and protest music that favours pedal steel and violin over raging guitars. Produced by outlaw country star Shooter Jennings, the sparse, intimate recording features none of the musical piss and vinegar that permeated Duff's 1993 solo debut, *Believe In Me*, but the lyrics – which tackle addiction, school shootings and the deaths of his peers – show that his shoulders aren't yet chip-free.

FOR FANS OF: Mark Lanegan, Bob Dylan, Rolling Stones

CLAY MARSHALL

MENTAL CRUELTY
Inferis
UNIQUE LEADER

Teutonic deathcore crew fail to break the mould

Inferis is these young Germans' second full-length in the space of three years, but impressive as that is, taking more time to hone their craft would have been preferable to whacking out yet more generic deathcore into the ether. This is a love letter to the tropes of deathcore with absolutely no deviation whatsoever. In places it can be very enjoyable; *Godhunt* is absurdly and hilariously brutal, pig squeals and tar-thick beatdowns and all. But in other places this just feels like tricks you've heard a fair few times too many to really make any lasting impact.

FOR FANS OF: Job For A Cowboy, Martyr Defiled, Oceano

STEPHEN HILL

MØL
I/II
HOLY ROAR

Blackgaze's latest standard bearers re-air their first steps

Denmark's Møl astonished metal fans and critics alike last year with their breath-taking debut album, *Jord*. It wasn't the band's first attempt at making their mark on the blackgaze movement, however, as evidenced by this reissue, bringing together the band's first two EPs. While *I/II* isn't quite up there with *Jord*, there are some very worthy songs here that can stand proud. *Kathexis* is a brilliant example of Møl's penchant for combining ethereal reverb-drenched textures with sensory-assaulting blackened hysteria and *Rush* provides exactly that; an elegiac, almost punk-tinged race that segues into a beautiful Slowdive-esque finish. This may be a stopgap before Møl get down to the nitty gritty of writing album number two, but given the quality of the songs present, it's more than worthy of your time.

FOR FANS OF: Deafheaven, Ghost Bath, Holy Fawn

REMFRY DEDMAN

NOCTURNUS AD
Paradox
PROFOUND LORE

Florida's sci-fi death master goes back to the future

As if the return of Possessed wasn't exciting enough, death metal legend (and original Morbid Angel man) Mike Browning has finally completed the resurrection of cult heroes Nocturnus. The Floridian band's debut album, *The Key*, brought swirly, sci-fi keyboards and other unhinged madness to the nascent death metal blueprint back in 1990, and it's that unmistakable and epoch-mincing sound that Browning has returned to here, rather than the proggier endeavours of second album, *Thresholds*. Like its revered precursor, this is a concept piece full of occult menace and inter-galactic insanity. Fervently old-school in execution but every bit as jarring and alien as *The Key* was 29 years ago, songs like *Precession Of The Equinoxes* and *The Return Of The Lost Key* confirm that Browning's cracked mirror re-imagining of death metal is as unique and enthralling as it ever was.

FOR FANS OF: Possessed, Emperor, Morbid Angel

DOM LAWSON

OF VIRTUE
What Defines You
SHARPTONE

Michigan metalcore mob look in and rage out

Of Virtue's previous album, 2015's *Salvation*, was a more than decent slab of modern metalcore. Underpinned by impassioned blasts of melodic hardcore, it breathed new life into a stagnant genre, showcasing a determination to move beyond genre clichés. The Michigan five-piece's third full-length is a step up, not least in terms of groove and brutality. *What Defines You* begins as it means to go on with *No Control*'s window-rattling roars and the bludgeoning riffs permeating lead single *Suffer*. Choruses are soaring and earnest, and the lyrics alternate between gut-punching anger and brooding introspection. Some tracks are less memorable than others, but the anthemic *Thanks For Nothing* employs gang chants that should earn rowdy audiences and *Torn Apart* showcases the balanced mix of emotive soundscapes and raw aggression that make this band truly shine. Familiar but warrants your attention.

FOR FANS OF: Currents, Misery Signals, The Royal

SOPHIE MAUGHAN

OSIAH
Kingdom Of Lies
UNIQUE LEADER

British deathcore troupe fail to find a new groove

When Sunderland's Osiah released their debut album, *Terra Firma*, in 2016, they told anyone who would listen that they didn't strive to exist in just one subgenre. They just wanted to be heavy, regardless of what labels their music would gain along the way. This gives *Kingdom Of Lies* a dark irony, as it indulges in so many deathcore clichés that it makes Chelsea Grin sound like genre-smashing progressives by comparison. Once you get past the droning guitars, incessant pig squeals and annoyingly random and drastic changes in tempo, there's precious little to talk about. Actual attempts at diversification are few and far between, most notably the half-second stab at clean vocals during *Awakening*. Only the most persistent of deathcore's followers will enjoy *Kingdom...*, which must be frustrating for a band who consider themselves transcendent.

FOR FANS OF: Chelsea Grin, Infant Annihilator, Impending Doom

MATT MILLS

Fleshgod Apocalypse: gagging to find those After Eights

FLESHGOD APOCALYPSE
Veleno
NUCLEAR BLAST

Italian maestros throw caution to the wind and strings

FOURTH ALBUM *KING* was a pivotal release for Perugia's Fleshgod Apocalypse, with their characteristic grandiloquent wall of sound scaled back for more considered, multifarious compositions. It's an approach further explored here, albeit without long-time members Cristiano Trionfera and Tommaso Riccardi, with Francesco Paoli assuming his original role as guitarist and vocalist, as well as taking care of drum duties in the studio.

Given that it features a real string quartet and other classical instruments for the first time, on first impression they seem low in the mix, leaving *Veleno* feeling somewhat restrained. However, on repeated listens the enormity of the band's scope builds into tantalising peaks, with the thrust and parry of the jolting death metal complementing the choirs and strings that swing between frantic and reticent. *Sugar* is a delirious marriage of Francesco Ferrini's feverish ivory tinkling and bullish theatrics, while the stripped-down verses of *Monnalisa* make for an ideal accompaniment to the dramatic chorus and *Pissing On The Score* builds from agitated duelling strings into a resplendent lead break.

It's a shame there isn't more room for the phenomenal operatic pipes of Veronica Bordacchini that are fully unleashed on the melancholic aria *The Day We'll Be Gone*, and closing opulence of *Embrace The Oblivion*, particularly in place of the often grating cleans of bassist Paolo Rossi that hamstring the malevolent yet magnificence shape-shifting of *Carnivorous Lamb* and *Absinthe*.

While some of their peers may opt for more polished bombast, there's something devilishly intriguing about Fleshgod Apocalypse's enlightened take on symphonic metal, and much like the classical repertoire that they're clearly ardent students of, there's plenty of nooks and deft touches to dissect and analyse.

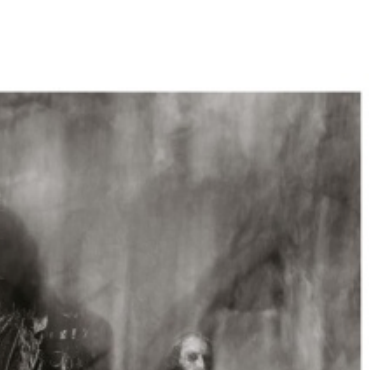
FOR FANS OF: Dimmu Borgir, Septicflesh, Cradle Of Filth

ADAM REES

Gaahl: still mystifying

GAAHLS WYRD
GastiR - Ghosts Invited
SEASON OF MIST

Black metal icon takes a turn for the unexpected



DESPITE HIS NOW-LEGENDARY status within the world of black metal (and beyond), Gaahl has lacked a consistent vehicle for his talents since he left Gorgoroth more than a decade ago in a notoriously acrimonious split. God Seed, formed with fellow Gorgoroth renegade King, imploded just as the group were making a name for themselves, and his first project, Trelldom, has remained dormant since 2007. Hopefully with Gaahls Wyrd he can develop what is still a powerful artistic vision and this album certainly suggests that is likely.

While the band's live setlist has, until now, relied purely on songs by Trelldom, Gorgoroth and God Seed, *GastiR - Ghosts Invited* does not particularly reflect this background. The elephant in the room is of course the clean vocals, since the single, *Ghosts Invited* – the third song here – broadcast that the band would be stepping away from their black metal roots, the track invoking a mix of classic goth rock and Enslaved-style progressive black metal. It's an approach that can be found throughout the record, most obviously in the epic march of *Carving The Voices*, which somehow manages to capture the unique live presence of the frontman, its slow pace and moody atmosphere interestingly also harking back to Gorgoroth's *Sign Of An Open Eye* despite the crooning.

With all that being said, rumours of the band's departure from black metal have been somewhat exaggerated; the discordant guitars, unrelenting percussive bombardment and unearthly screamed vocals of *Through And Past And Past* and *From The Spear* reveal the undeniably black metal foundation, the former song capturing the unique spirit of Trelldom, which is something this album (and black metal) would benefit from more of. *GastiR - Ghosts Invited* might have lost some of the viciousness of Gaahl's back catalogue, but it's a potent fresh beginning.

FOR FANS OF: God Seed, Secrets Of The Moon, Virus

DAYAL PATTERSON

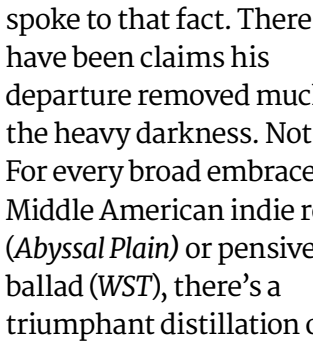
PELICAN
Nighttime Stories
SOUTHERN LORD

Chicago's instru-metal mavens weather their internal storms

As the member of these instrumental kings with the most amount of metal in his blood, ex-guitarist Laurent Schroeder-Lebec was Pelican's de facto defender of the faith; his *Screaming For Vengeance* chest tattoo spoke to that fact. There have been claims his departure removed much of the heavy darkness. Not so. For every broad embrace of Middle American indie rock (*Abyssal Plain)* or pensive ballad (*WST*), there's a triumphant distillation of 90s post-rock and doomy thrash (*Arteries Of Blacktop*), fetid downpicked crunching (the title track) and a direct summoning of their debut, *Australasia* (*Full Moon, Black Water*). The more subdued moments may trip over themselves, but *Nighttime Stories* lets loose both intellectually and emotionally.

FOR FANS OF: Intronaut, Baroness, Isis

CONNIE GORDON



PETROL GIRLS
Cut & Stitch
HASSLE

Visceral post-hardcore from the personal and political frontlines

UK/Austrian post-hardcore quartet Petrol Girls formed from a desire to challenge gender norms and stomp out sexism and sexual violence. Their incendiary 2016 debut, *Talk Of Violence*, saw vocalist Ren Aldridge screaming: '*Touch me again and I'll fucking kill you*' over jagged, Refused-esque guitar shards. On the band's equally visceral follow-up they've tackled mental health and the impact of austerity as well as taking a clompy boot to the nuts of patriarchy. *Big Mouth* samples X-Ray Spex's fem anthem *Oh Bondage! Up Yours!* as Ren snarls like a caged animal. *Skye* is the highlight, though, a heartbreaking ode to Ren's beloved dog and a moment of sheer vulnerability amongst the savagery

FOR FANS OF: Milk Teeth, Fugazi, Refused

DANNII LEIVERS

RENDEZVOUS POINT
Universal Chaos
LONG BRANCH

A convincing second odyssey of progressive Nordic awe

It's been three years since Rendezvous Point's debut, *Solar Storm*, but the Norwegian quintet have created a suitably brooding follow-up of smouldering twists and cinematic scope. Geirmund Hansen's evocative range dominates proceedings, reminiscent of Tesseract's Daniel Tompkins and Einar Solberg of Leprous, while synths come to the fore on the title track and *The Fall*. However, the real depth comes in the notes that colour the pulsating rhythms, with dark and shade battling for position throughout *The Takedown*'s Tool-esque journey. The best is saved for the closing duo of the lavish *Resurrection* and resounding *Undefeated*, with hopes that there isn't another three-year wait for album number three.

FOR FANS OF: Leprous, Black Peaks, Karnivool

ADAM REES

WORLD SERVICE
Heavy metal uprisings from around the globe

AFREET
Afreet EP
SELF-RELEASED

Afghanistan might seem an inhospitable climate for metal, but here it's given rise to four tracks of richly textured, engrossing testimony as post-metallic riffs unfurl into melodic shoots of hard-won hope.

JONATHAN SELZER

AGE OF THE WOLF
Ouroboric Trances
AURAL MUSIC

For all their Church Of Misery-style slipped-gear grooves, this Costa Rican stoner/sludge four-piece fashion a potent sense of atmosphere over the course of eight pilgrimages through purgatory.

JONATHAN SELZER

RAMBLIN' ROZE
Old Time Revival
SELF-RELEASED

Loaded up with Southern rock sensibilities, splashes of punk and Sabbathian blues, Chinese five-piece Ramblin' Roze's nostalgic note-topping soul is worth a listen for *Down By The River* alone.

HOLLY WRIGHT

SABBATH ASSEMBLY
A Letter Of Red
SVART

Occult-minded experimentalists take an intriguingly odd turn

Despite constant evolution, Sabbath Assembly have managed to retain a strong core identity. Having tried their hand at occult hymnals, soundtrack experimentation and looming prog they're now at the mid-point between classic rock and chilly 80s goth. Vocalist Jamie Myers manages to condense ambitious ideas and lofty esoteric references into the lean, efficient compositions. Musically things are similarly accomplished, hitting hard while also offering plenty to dissect beyond earworm melodies and outlandishly good musicianship. In spite of all this, however, there's something – a tendency to bluster, along with a slight emotional detachment – that means *A Letter Of Red* remains good rather than great. It's another odd and distinctive feather in their cap to be sure – just one that you won't necessarily give yourself over to heart and soul.

FOR FANS OF: Blood Ceremony, Gold, Siouxsie & The Banshees

ALEX DELLER

SAVAGE MESSIAH
Demons
CENTURY MEDIA

London's metal revivalists struggle to strike a balance

It's criminal that Savage Messiah have been so overlooked, seeing how the Londoners kickstarted their career by giving British thrash a much-needed shot in the arm. After releasing three masterful albums on the trot, the quartet stumbled slightly with a shift towards arena rock on 2017's *Hands Of Fate*. However, once *Demons*' lead single, *Under No Illusions*, landed, there was a cautious optimism that this outing could mark a return to form. And there's certainly promise here. Songs like *Rise Then Fall* and *Virtue Signal* mix speed metal and NWOBHM tropes in a call-back to what made this band shine in their early days. On the other hand you have the likes of *Parachute* and *What Dreams May Come*, which lean too far into hyper-melodic territory and feel cheesy and confused because of it. It's heartbreaking hearing youngsters who had so much promise release an album whose songwriting is as patchy as it is here.

FOR FANS OF: The Raven Age, Metallica, Gama Bomb

MATT MILLS

SCREAM BLUE MURDER
Rock Bottom
STAY SICK RECORDINGS

Midlands metalcore outfit break out of their rut

This follow-up to this Coventry metalcore quartet's debut, *Hollow Stories*, is a mixed bag. Overall, *Rock Bottom* enjoys much of the bouncy, sing-along vibe of that album's *We Are Survivors*, but, with the exception of the memorable *Inside*, the first few tracks seem slightly formulaic. *Rock Bottom* drags and *Bury Me*, despite the playful synth, has a basic, repetitive chorus. Both tracks, as well as *Light It Up*, are dampened by uncharacteristically restrained vocals that seem to simply go through the motions. Fortunately, vocalist Aaron Bloomer comes into his own once again one the second half of the album. As soon as SBM turn up the pace, passion, and rage for gems like *The Void*, *The Anchor*, *Friends Like Judas* and *Victims Of Violence* the blend of heavy and catchy is immediately more explosive and anthemic. More of this, please.

FOR FANS OF: Bullet For My Valentine, Bring Me The Horizon, Architects

NIK YOUNG

SPIRIT ADRIFT
Divided By Darkness
SOULFOOD

Expansive Arizona metallers weave the finest of yarns

Spirit Adrift's third album comes layered with weighty influences, but uses them as a foundation for the band to expand their own sonic brew. You can hear the likes of Mastodon in the progressive stomp of *We Will Not Die* and Iron Maiden in its guitar interplay of the title track. The album's uniqueness is the chemistry between colossal, crunchy riffs and the ingenious melodies stitched throughout it, like a half-speed Metallica, each element complementing the other but neither becoming overbearing. The Arizonians have continued to transform themselves into a sharpened heavy metal doom band who sound like they've been around for far longer than they actually have been. They have embraced the past to navigate the future and *Divided By Darkness* is the map to light the way.

FOR FANS OF: Iron Maiden, Mastodon, Dream Theater

CRAIG HUNTLEY

Gloryhammer: Marvel had to cut the shit out of their film budget

GLORYHAMMER
Legends From Beyond The Galactic Terrorvortex
NAPALM

Alestorm's captain uncovers a host of absurdist hooks

WHILE THE MORE earnest power/fantasy/dork metal fans might argue that there isn't a thin line between the serious and the ridiculous, there really is. Explaining the premise behind Blind Guardian's *Nightfall In Middle-Earth* to a dinner party of Tolkien buffs is fine but try dragging them to a battle re-enactment at Bloodstock while a pirate metal band plays mainstage. Fortunately, the majority of anything-goes metalheads who are well-versed in decades of concoctions of fantastical heavy sounds don't really give a shit if a band sings about orks or space unicorns. Does it sound good? Check. Is it fun? Check. Can the band play their instruments? Check. Awesome. Let the party begin.

Forged from the pirate-y loins of Alestorm's captain, Christopher Bowes, who led his cohorts to inconceivable levels of success, Gloryhammer have taken the concept of incredulous thematic-splicing to pastures new. Just like he extracted unfathomable depths of material from life on the seas, and all the rum drinking that came with it, Gloryhammer are now on their third album about saving Dundee (yes, that's Dundee, Scotland) from the evil sorcerer Zargothrax. In this latest chapter of the Gloryhammer saga the brave protagonist, Angus McFife XIII (played by Swiss warbler Thomas Winkler, a one-time auditionee for Dragonforce), follows his enemy into a Martian dimension where sci-fi and fantasy collides.

For all its silliness, Gloryhammer's third endeavour to save the kingdom of Fife is a stonking symphonic power metal record consolidating many of the best-loved tropes of the genre with the sort of pristine delivery you'd hear on Blind Guardian or Rhapsody. Sure, songtitles like *Power Of The Laser Dragon Fire* sound dorkier than a hackathon but the surging choruses, Paul Templing's joyous fretwork and our favourite party pirate Master Bowes providing those zippy keys make an enthralling, victorious ride.

FOR FANS OF: Sabaton, Twilight Force, Rhapsody

HOLLY WRIGHT

Heart Of A Coward's defensive wall had a distinct air of resignation

HEART OF A COWARD

The Disconnect

ARISING EMPIRE

UK tech-death marauders prove their worth

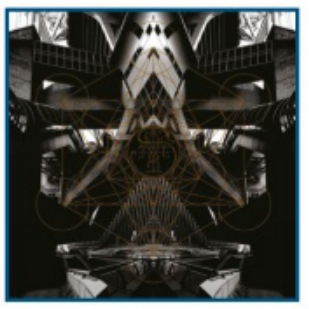
WHAT MUST BE hugely frustrating for both bandmembers and fans of Heart Of A Coward is to see bands with just a fraction of their invention and prowess, as both a live act and recording artists, leapfrog into higher positions on bills whilst they maintain the same dedicated but smaller fanbase. The fact that *The Disconnect* is here at all, after the departure of much-admired frontman Jamie Graham in 2017 and the continued apathy toward them by the wider world, feels like a triumph in itself. And it will be no shock to long-time, clued up listeners that HOAC's problems have no direct correlation with the quality of their music. Because, once again, this is a perfectly executed modern, technical metal album, full of throbbing grooves and thick, taut guitar riffs, with new vocalist Kaan Tasan slipping into Graham's shoes confidently and admirably.

The first three songs of the record alone are enough to shake the listener into submission; *Drown In Ruin* goes full mathcore before giving way to an Earth-rumbling riff, *Ritual*'s double-time pace is as savage as an acid attack, and then *Collapse* comes in with a chorus that would sound perfect on US radio, whilst surrounding itself with a gut-punching bounce that would eat Breaking Benjamin for breakfast.

But, as ever, the thing that really drives all of HOAC's music is a seemingly never-ending supply of ingenious, body-moving, concrete-heavy guitar parts from Carl Ayers and Steve Haycock. Their consistency means the quality rarely dips, and if this kind of metal is your bag then it seems unfathomable that you wouldn't just drop and give yourself up to HOAC right now. Quite why they haven't ever truly crossed over in the way that many of their peers have is a proper headscratcher, and if they haven't yet then you'd have to wonder if maybe their chance to do so has gone. That would be a shame, but it's everyone else's loss. Heart Of A Coward have more than done their bit on *The Disconnect*.

FOR FANS OF: Architects, Whitechapel, Meshuggah

STEPHEN HILL



STELLAR MASTER ELITE

Hologram Temple

UNHOLY CONSPIRACY DEATHWORK

German blackened doom in the key of unholy fucking shitballs

Four years since this German four-piece completed their harrowing trilogy of grizzly blackened doom, *Hologram Temple* marks a new sludgy chapter so heavy it puts King Kong's left bollock to shame. Their transition from typical black metal blastbeaters to sophisticated death machine is cemented all over this record. You can talk about their trudging grooves and thunderous pacing all day long, but where SME really inject the fear into their sound is with their sublime textures that send your soul to a dystopic oblivion for a solid hour. Even the most iron-cladded bowel might lose it when those Vangelis-inspired synths kick in on *Ad Infinitum* and *Black Hole Dementia*. A triumphant and terrifying return.

FOR FANS OF: Mammoth Weed Wizard Bastard, Behemoth, Thorns

HYWEL DAVIES

THIS GIFT IS A CURSE

A Throne Of Ash

SEASON OF MIST

Eclectic Swedish ragers up the ante on album number three

This Swedish quintet have made plenty of tongues wag – and heads bang – with their feral fusion of black metal, hardcore, sludge, drone and noise rock, and their third full-length sees the musical magpies soar to new heights. Crammed with plenty of explosive, neck-bothering hybrid moments, *A Throne Of Ash* could score a riot in Arkham Asylum and the addition of second guitarist David Deravian offers them the freedom to really let their imaginations run wild. *Blood Is My Harvest* is a highlight thanks to some Mike Patton-esque howling vocals, as is *In Your Black Halo*, which manages to sound both eerie and electrifying over the course of nearly six minutes, whilst tipping a cap to Akira Yamaoka along the way.

FOR FANS OF: Dark Funeral, Dragged Into Sunlight, Cult Of Luna

EDWIN MCFEE

DANIEL TOMPKINS

Castles

KSCOPE

Tesseract frontman finds fresh solo pastures to explore

Over the last 11 years, Tesseract's Dan Tompkins has become one of our scene's most distinctive voices. He's been keen to step outside the boundaries of his day job, releasing 15 albums with myriad bands that span prog metal, post-rock and experimental pop and *Castles*, his first solo effort, breaks similarly new ground. Dan's silky voice is naturally the star, unfurling above warped sub-bass on single *Saved*, skittering beats on *Kiss* and sparse piano on *Cinders*. Metal and prog fans will find no shape-shifting riffs here – though rough guitars do crash like wild waves on the chorus of *Black The Sun* – instead, this is an exploration of texture and sound that adds another string to Daniel's bow.

FOR FANS OF: Tesseract, Skyharbor, Valis Ablaze

DANNII LEIVERS

VALBORG
Zentrum
PROPHECY PRODUCTIONS

Strident German metallers find themselves on unfamiliar ground

Having wallowed between death, doom and black metal since their 2009 debut, *Glorification Of Pain* – albeit with natively Teutonic efficiency – Valborg's last album, *Endstrand*, saw them moving into more strident territory, matching a relentless mid-pace to juddering Triptykon-esque grooves. *Zentrum* sees their acerbic stomp and barked vocals sounding almost helpless, as if being led, Scrooge-like, on a tour of past indiscretions. *Alphakomet*'s purposeful stride finds itself in whorls of queasy atmospherics, while *Anomalie* lashes itself to Godflesh's pitiless pneumatic gears and *Nahtod* takes on a Rammstein-style grandeur. Yet Valborg's distinct identity is riven throughout: a tension-steeped transitional state between belligerence and desperation, marching into realms that grow ever more eerie and unfamiliar.

FOR FANS OF: Triptykon, Godflesh, Rammstein

JONATHAN SELZER

VORDEMFALL
Gravity Problems
SLOWING

Noisy, nightmarish Berliners put their skronk on the wonk

The standard drill for two-piece bands is to play everything through monolithic amp stacks and use as many ear-bursting FX pedals as possible. Vordemfall should be commended for defying the consensus. *Gravity Problems* is a deeply wonky noise rock record, full of lolloping grooves and clanging bass riffs, but it's also nothing like a noise rock record at all. You can hear the sparse clatter of various Steve Albini projects in *Smile* and *The Secret Of Bruxism*, but whether by intuition or design, this duo's delivery is consistently skewed towards art rock mischief. As frontwoman Monika Saint-Oktobre hisses, *'I want to talk to the sinners...', My Name Is Who* morphs into a frazzled psychedelic nightmare, with glowering drones, prickly feedback and a sense of fraught terror worthy of early Swans. Crikey.

FOR FANS OF: Årabrot, Shellac, Melvins

DOM LAWSON

VORTEX OF END
Ardens Fvror
OSMOSE PRODUCTIONS

Gallic quartet mine new riches from the black/death seam

This French foursome have the potential to become blackened death metal spearheads, controlling the dissonance between both styles as expertly as any of their fellow countrymen. However, they're no Deathspell Omega disciples by any stretch; VOE contrast the oblique aspects of this discordant, turbulent subgenre with ambient passages, melodic black metal flourishes (*Venomovs Triangle*), Absu/Melechesh-style mysticism (*Transvbstantiation*), and a vast array of wounded shrieks, screams and chants. VOE therefore have a larger sonic palette to paint from than most of their black/death peers. There are still structural issues to iron out, though, as some ambient movements hamper momentum during the longer tracks and quite often the arrangements mimic each other too closely. If VOE can refine how they transition between disparate ideas, there'll be a biblical plague upon our doors.

FOR FANS OF: Deathspell Omega, Rebirth Of Nefast, Arkhon Infaustus

DEAN BROWN

DANNY WORSNOP
Shades Of Blue
SUMERIAN

Asking Alexandra's reformed wildman hits a redemptive note

As with most huge personalities, every album featuring Danny Worsnop has been an emotional rollercoaster. We've tracked his path, from hedonistic scenester with Asking Alexandria, to debauched degenerate in We Are Harlot, and finally Nashville outlaw with his 2017 solo debut, *The Long Road Home* – a record following years of drink, drugs and heartbreak. But on *Shades Of Blue*, his second country-inspired solo album, Danny has turned a corner. While regret tinges his fantastic vocals on *Am I A Fool* and *Tell Her I Said Hey*, *Little Did I Know* looks forward to the future, and there's a sense of maturity on *I've Been Down*, where he sings: *'If time's taught me one thing, it's don't take for granted the time that you have.'* We've seen all of Danny's many personas, but healing is a new look for him, and he wears it well.

FOR FANS OF: Asking Alexandria, The Allman Brothers, Blackberry Smoke

DANNII LEIVERS

MIW: still missing the bullseye

MOTIONLESS IN WHITE
Disguise
ROADRUNNER

Pennsylvania's goth-metallers still standing in the shadows

SINCE THEIR SCRAPPY punk beginnings in 2007, goth metallers Motionless In White have evolved into an arena-eyeballing proposition with the potential to be one of the biggest bands in our world. But when it comes to albums, they're yet to release a total stone-cold classic. *Disguise* might just be the closest they've come so far, though. Like 2017's *Graveyard Shift*, their fifth album tinkers with the same industrial metalcore template the band have had in place since 2012's *Infamous*. Yet, as the opening title track kicks off proceedings with a huge nu metal riff, only to be outdone later by *Thoughts And Prayers*, which piles in on a barrage of thundering Joey Jordison-esque drums and gruesomely vicious vocals, it's clear this is the Pennsylvanians' heaviest material to date.

Horror has always been a big part of what Motionless In White do and the band have never used that influence more satisfyingly than on *Legacy*, where Chris Cerulli screams *'Black is the blood I will bleed.'* Or on *Undead Ahead 2: The Tale Of The Midnight Ride*, which boasts a fiendish intro that recalls the theme of *Chilling Adventures Of Sabrina* and an outlandishly grisly chorus of *'Crimson coagulate, severed head bouquet'* and chants of *'Headless! Headless!'*

Of course, the problem with *Disguise* is the same issue which lies at the core of every other Motionless record: there are moments where the band's influences loom too large to ignore. Despite *Code* being one of the album's best cuts, its chorus bears a striking resemblance to Linkin Park's *Numb* and a band on this level shouldn't be packing cut-and-paste jobs like the Korn-esque *Headache* or *Broadcasting From Beyond The Grave: Death Inc*, which descends into distinctly Rob Zombie territory. *Disguise* is MIW's best release so far but until they can separate themselves from their influences, that 'classic' album will elude them.

FOR FANS OF: Ice Nine Kills, Slipknot, Rob Zombie

DANNII LEIVERS

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OCT 10 LONDON O2 Arena
OCT 11 BIRMINGHAM Resorts World Arena
OCT 12 CARDIFF Arena

ANNIHILATOR

OCT 26 LONDON Underworld

BABYMETAL

JULY 2 LONDON Brixton Academy

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MAY 31 LONDON Underworld
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JUN 2 MANCHESTER Rebellion

GLORYHAMMER
BEAST IN BLACK

OCT 18 LONDON Heaven
OCT 19 MANCHESTER Club Academy
OCT 20 BRISTOL SWX
OCT 22 BIRMINGHAM The Mill
OCT 23 NOTTINGHAM Rescue Rooms
OCT 24 DUBLIN Academy
OCT 25 GLASGOW Slay
OCT 26 DUNDEE Church

GODFLESH

JUL 19–21 BIRMINGHAM Supersonic Festival
JUL 20 LONDON O2 Kentish Town Forum
AUG 7–11 OVINGTON BoomTown Fair

GOJIRA

JUN 29 BIRMINGHAM O2 Academy
JUN 30 LONDON O2 Academy
JUL 1 MANCHESTER O2 Apollo

HALESTORM

JUN 15 DERBYSHIRE Download Festival
NOV 24 GLASGOW The SSE
NOV 25 NOTTINGHAM Motorpoint Arena
NOV 27 CARDIFF Motorpoint Arena
NOV 28 LONDON Alexandra Palace

HEART OF A COWARD
ANY GIVEN DAY

JUN 4 MANCHESTER Rebellion
JUN 5 GLASGOW Classic Grand
JUN 6 NORWICH Waterfront
JUN 7 LONDON Underworld
JUN 8 BRIGHTON The Haunt

KISS

JUL 9 BIRMINGHAM Arena
JUL 11 LONDON O2 Arena
JUL 12 MANCHESTER Arena
JUL 14 NEWCASTLE Arena
JUL 16 GLASGOW SSE Hydro

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Heart Of A Coward are bringing the party

ROAD TRIPPIN'

HEART OF A COWARD

With new singer Kaan now bedded in, the UK metallers hit the road next month

How are you settling into Heart Of A Coward, Kaan?
Kaan Tasan (vocals): "It's been very good, the creative process with everybody has really helped settle me in. To be honest, I find the old songs so much fun because ultimately I'm still a Heart Of A Coward fan, too; even before we knew each other, I'm a big fan of Jamie's vocals, so I wanted to mirror what Jamie was doing while also putting my twist on it. There was a lot of pressure and anticipation I put on myself to make sure I had everything to the best standard as I could but as soon as a song starts on stage, you go into automatic mode."

Your first album together, *The Disconnect*, is out in June. What's changed?
"As an album, it's a really solid progression for the band to play to my strengths while still keeping the HOAC sound. A lot has changed since 2015; the core sound of the band is the same but because I came from a prog and tech background, I tried to instil more of a proggy vibe, because there's nothing wrong with jamming out some sections to see what happens. Ultimately, it's still heavy, punishing, brutal and melodic HOAC, so I'm very excited for people to hear it."

What else have you got up your sleeves this year?
"We have a headline run in June. We've not thought about setlists for that yet but we're doing an April tour with Any Given Day. The best way to describe it is we're doing a party set – all the bangers with one more new song. The plan is to get everybody rowdy! Our set at Download will be my first time performing there so I'm absolutely buzzing. I don't want to count away the days but I also do, I just want to get to it now!"

What's the strangest thing you've ever seen on stage?
"With my old band, No Consequence, we played a pre-party Halloween show before a big club night and everybody was in fancy dress. Someone from the crowd threw a baby doll at me with its head ripped off, covered in blood. It hit me and I looked down wondering what the hell it was, then as I picked it up, they threw the head over too. If it wasn't Halloween, I'd think that'd be horrendous!"

Savage Messiah: not thrash

ROAD TRIPPIN'

SAVAGE MESSIAH

The Brit definitely-not-thrashers support Symphony X across a smattering of UK dates

You're hitting the road supporting Symphony X: what can we expect?
Dave Silver (vocals/guitar): "Fireworks! Some good heavy metal, man: a high-energy, super-engaging metal show!"

You will be playing the Electric Ballroom in London. Do you prefer small clubs or big stages?
"I prefer bigger stages. We're quite lucky because we've done almost every kind of gig that you can do. From, like, the smallest pub to the second-biggest indoor arena in the world in Tokyo, which was nuts! If there is 45,000 people there, like at Hellfest, that's so much more fun than a hundred people at The Black Heart in Camden."

The tour will be coming in support of your new album, Demons. Can we expect to hear a lot of new material?
"Yeah, it will probably be mostly new material. Whenever we do new material we discard anything we did previously so we can get behind the new stuff."

With five albums, do you find it difficult to craft setlists?
"It depends on what we are doing. This tour, Symphony X's fanbase probably don't know who we are so we'll probably focus on the new stuff, but we've toured with so many different kinds of bands. We've toured with Cradle of Filth, Exodus, Overkill, Amon Amarth… all of those bands have slightly different audiences. It's cool we've got fans from all those different areas."

Is thrash metal due another comeback like in the mid-00s?
"No, probably not. It's always been a bone of contention with me that we got lumped in with that because we've never considered ourselves a thrash band. There's an element of it in what we do but, if you use your ears and listen, there's a ton of other stuff there. I mean, we had a ballad on our EP when we were an unsigned band!"

Are there any countries you'd love to visit?
"We've done 28 countries across two continents which is so cool but we've never been to South America. I know it's a bit of an internet meme, the whole 'come to Brazil!' thing but yeah, we'd love to go there."

Uncle Al will be bringing the Ministry machine to the UK for four dates in July

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NOV 14 DUBLIN Academy
NOV 15 BRISTOL SWX
NOV 16 LONDON O2 Kentish Town Forum
NOV 17 NOTTINGHAM Rock City

MACHINE HEAD
NOV 2 LONDON Brixton Academy
NOV 4 MANCHESTER O2 Victoria Warehouse
NOV 5 GLASGOW O2 Academy
NOV 7 BELFAST Telegraph Building
NOV 8 DUBLIN Olympia Theatre

METALLICA
GHOST
BOKASSA
JUN 8 DUBLIN Slane Castle
JUN 18 MANCHESTER Etihad Stadium
JUN 20 LONDON Twickenham Stadium

MINISTRY
3TEETH
JUL 2 BRISTOL SWX
JUL 3 GLASGOW SWG3
JUL 4 BIRMINGHAM O2 Institute
JUL 6 LONDON O2 Shepherds Bush Empire

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JUL 19 BIRMINGHAM Supersonic Festival
JUL 20 LONDON Kentish Town Forum

POLARIS
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QUEENSRŸCHE
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AUG 13 NORWICH Waterfront
AUG 14 LONDON Islington Assembly Hall

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NOV 29 NEWCASTLE University
NOV 30 GLASGOW Classic Grand
DEC 1 BELFAST Limelight
DEC 3 DUBLIN Voodoo Lounge
DEC 4 WOLVERHAMPTON Steel Mill

SUPERSONIC FESTIVAL
NEUROSIS, YOB, GODFLESH, THE BODY & MORE
JUL 19-21 BIRMINGHAM Various venues

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SAVAGE MESSIAH
JUN 4 COVENTRY Empire
JUN 5 HOLMFIRTH Picturedrome
JUN 6 LONDON Electric Ballroom

TENACIOUS D
JUN 2 LONDON Wembley Arena

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AUG 9 WINCHESTER Boomtown Festival
AUG 24 BELFAST Custom House Square
SEPT 21 THURLES, IRELAND Tipp Classical
OCT 5 LONDON Indie Daze Festival

VLTIMAS
JUN 21 LONDON Underworld

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LIVE REVIEWS

ROADBURN 2019

VARIOUS VENUES, TILBURG, NETHERLANDS

Tilburg's beloved festival unleashes a host of therapeutic thrills

THURSDAY

Even more so than previous years, the 20th Roadburn Festival feels like a cathartic, spirit-lifting experience. Perhaps it's the memories of cherished artists who had passed that will permeate the next four days, or that its sense of communal, chilled refuge has taken on added necessity, but not even the unseasonal cold snap can take away from the knowledge that Roadburn is a personal, transformative pilgrimage. If you're looking for clarity, **MYRKUR**'s crystalline lilt is a good place to start. Seated at a grand piano in the main 013 venue, her folk set isn't so much connective tissue as connective gossamer, an elegant yet elemental undertaking that puts your brain on the most natural of highs. Fronted by Farida Lemouchi, sister of the late Selim, **MOLASSES** are a liberating, if initially bewildering experience, putting The Devil's Blood's DNA on a roaming, jazzier footing that takes time to coalesce around their frontwoman's soaring, open-hearted vocals. Nature comes calling again with **HEXVESSEL**'s full rendition of their *All Tree* album. Earthy, intimate yet prone to psychedelic excursions, this is folk as plaintive act of communion. Raw, intense, emotional, uncomfortable: **LINGUA IGNOTA** is all of these things, her deeply personal Green Room performance and unnerving sincerity leaving everyone breathless and bruised. Her music is intermittently beautiful *and* grotesque, but it's an aching cover of Dolly Parton's *Jolene* that seals the deal with a rapt crowd. **EMMA RUTH RUNDLE**'s reverberating sonic wall of sound fills the Koepelhal like a warm embrace. Backed by Jaye Jayle, she focuses predominantly on songs from 2018's *On Dark Horses* but the best moment comes when she stands alone for a beautiful rendition of *Real Big Sky*. **TWIN TEMPLE**'s mixture of retro rock'n'soul and enlightened Satanism is an irresistible rabbit hole to dive into. Sounding immaculate and looking even better, the Californians turn the Het Patronaat into a riot of euphoric devilry with slick gems like *I Know How To Hex You*. The 013 is absolutely packed for **HEILUNG** and their percussive, ritualistic energy resonates on the most enthralling of frequencies. By turns wild, serene and rave-like, it's a spirit-retuning spectacle that you take away with you as a gift.

Heilung unleash ancestral anarchy upon Roadburn

THE SETS

SLEEP (HOLY MOUNTAIN)
Dragonaut
The Druid
Evil Gypsy/ Solomon's Theme
Some Grass
Aquarian
Holy Mountain
Inside The Sun
From Beyond
Nain's Baptism
Dopesmoker
The Clarity

SLEEP (THE SCIENCES)
The Sciences
Leagues Beneath
Marijuanaut's Theme
Sonic Titan
Giza Butler
Antarcticans Thawed
The Botanist
Holy Mountain
Dragonaut
Cultivator

FRIDAY

Performing Tom G Warrior's three-part *Requiem* in full for the first and only time, **TRIPTYKON** initially suffer with sound issues, but normal, crushing service is swiftly resumed. Monolithically heavy and weirdly moving, *Requiem* is daring and extravagant, its unfamiliar second section proving particularly spell-binding. **ANNA VON HAUSSWOLFF** brings a beguiling mix of post-rock, drone and art pop to the 013 stage, and utterly captivates 3,000 people in the process. Playing the majority of her last album, *Dead Magic*, she is utterly bewitching and mesmerising throughout. As is **AA WILLIAMS** at a packed Hall Of Fame. Slowing time down to below your natural beat, she and her band engage in deep, emotional dowsing, and when her smoky vocals take centre stage your entire heart collapses around the gravity of the moment. A conventional metal band by Roadburn standards, **AT THE GATES** pitch their headline set brilliantly, opening with an instrumental King Crimson cover and serving up numerous mad surprises in between the expected bursts of death metal fury. Anna von Hausswolff, Matt Pike and Amebix/Tau Cross legend Rob Miller all make an appearance during an endearingly schizophrenic but hugely celebratory 90 minutes. Death still rules all. **LOOP**'s pioneering space-gaze attack still sounds like a gift from outer space. From a sublime *Afterglow* to a pummelling *Collision*, lysergic resonance cascades, as timeless and cosmic as the stars above.

SATURDAY

Fully deserving of their main stage slot, **WOLVENNEST** perform last year's *Void* album in its warped and wayward entirety. Juggling dark psychedelia and black metal bombast with equal skill, they are one of the festival's most charismatic acts and the mob goes wild accordingly. **CAVE IN**'s acoustic set in memory of bassist Caleb Scofeld last year was an Atlas-like act of spirit-raising. Today's set feels more celebratory, despite the haphazard sound mix, until a final *Sing My Loves* explodes in kaleidoscopic glory. The passing of **DODECAHEDRON** frontman Michiel Eikenaar the previous day after battling cancer has also left a deep mark on Roadburn, but he's present in every overwhelmingly expansive note of the Dutch avant-black metallers' set, turning it from an act of remembrance into a synapse-gorging send-off. Much more pop-led than most of the acts that will grace Roadburn this year, **LOUISE LEMÓN**'s live show benefits from fantastic backing arrangements and Louise's bid to become a gothic member of The Supremes. The soul injected into *Not Enough* and *Cross* make them utterly infectious. Roadburn is edging steadily away from its doomy remit, but **SLEEP** confirm that the power of the riff still obliterates everything else. Playing classic albums

Sleep: Matt Pike reawakens the Dragonaut

ESTER SEGARRA

Holy Mountain and *The Sciences* in full, the legendary trio make the 013 shake with a peerless display of psychedelic brutality. Some bands play encores. Sleep play *Dopesmoker*. Monumental.

SUNDAY

DAUGHTERS are seemingly hardcore gods to some, overrated chancers to others. There are some strong, gnarly moments in their set, but frontman Alexis Marshall's furniture-mounting antics and monotone yelp remain an acquired taste. Detonating into a wall of feedback at the beginning of their fourth and final set of the festival – not least last night's wildly celebratory Misfits cover riot – **THOU**'s main stage final set is the most 'typically' them, their tar-black sludgy grooves taking on an epic, spiritually devastated resonance. **ULCERATE**'s sound is crystal clear and truly monstrous as the Kiwi trio pulverise a packed Green Room with some of the most deranged and adventurous death metal of recent times. A band who also had Caleb Schofield grace their ranks, **OLD MAN GLOOM** bring their sludgy, simian-obsessed rites to monumental levels. Summoning up elemental, consciousness-riveting grooves, they're given added weight by Converge's Jake Bannon taking to the stage for a final brace of Zozobra tracks in honour of the late bassist who founded them – a coming together for which Roadburn has become a locus. French hardcore trio **BIRDS IN ROW**'s furious, angular punk-politick rhetoric is a startling wake-up call as songs from last year's *We Already Lost The World* reach new peaks and reveal new nuances live. With Patronaat being repurposed next year, avant masked alchemists **IMPERIAL TRIUMPHANT** offer a spectacular send-off, their noir-ish and cacophonous black metal delirium reimagining their native New York as a dream state beyond space and time beneath a stark, *Metropolis* backdrop. In true Roadburn fashion, co-ordinates are scrambled, but it feels very much like home.

REMFRY DEDMAN/DOM LAWSON/ JONATHAN SELZER

Twin Temple: Satanic soul rebels

Triptykon's *Requiem* takes flight

MANOWAR

O2 ACADEMY, BIRMINGHAM

As they approach the end of their climactic Final Battle tour, Manowar are more than aware of how they are perceived. To many, the New Yorkers' imperious bluster represents the worst of metal's corniness and empty pomp. But fuck those people. Among Manowar's many contributions to heavy metal over the last four decades have been the strident reaffirmation of the genre's sonic values and the proud propagation of its universal message of solidarity. It's not fucking complicated, folks. And if you don't love big, bombastic metal anthems about warriors, battles, monsters and Gods… well, we very much respect your rights as a consumer and other bands *are* available. But when Manowar hit the stage in Birmingham, it's hard to think of many other bands that are so utterly irresistible in their truly-do-not-give-a-fuck metalness.

Across two celebratory shows, Joey DeMaio's crew deliver exactly what the assembled Manowarriors want, blasting through a set of fan favourites from across their catalogue and shaking the venue's foundations with volume and clarity levels that make many ostensibly bigger bands sound woefully half-arsed. New guitarist E.V. Martel is an effortless virtuoso, slotting into his role with seamless panache and a dash of star quality, and latest recruit, ex-Hammerfall drummer Anders Johansson, nails every song like a pro; the muscle behind Joey's scorched-earth bass attack. Meanwhile, both Joey and frontman Eric Adams are on peerless form; the bassist's now obligatory, ear-eviscerating solo spot feels somehow edgier these days and the twinkle in Eric's eye, as he leads the crowd in any number of raucous singalongs, could light up the venue on its own.

And yes, the whole thing is preposterous, and *brilliantly* so. The stage is adorned with glowing, hissing volcanos, grandiose pillars and enough dry ice to choke a minotaur, not to mention towering speaker stacks that are all unquestionably switched on. Frankly, it's hard to imagine which part of this *wouldn't* be colossally entertaining to any sane metal fan. There are still few things more joyous and uplifting than bellowing along with the likes of *Blood Of My Enemies, Call To Arms* and *Hail And Kill* and when both nights' audiences reveal that they know every single word to *The Gods Made Heavy Metal*, Eric Adams looks so happy that his face might split. By the time they tear through traditional closer *Black Wind, Fire And Steel*, Manowar are surfing towards the exit on a sustained wave of love and goodwill. It's a heavy metal party. Nobody likes us but we don't care. Fuck the world. Hail and kill. We'll never see their like again.

DOM LAWSON

DEVIN TOWNSEND

BUSH HALL, LONDON

Canada's virtuoso voyager gets intimate and personal

DEVIN TOWNSEND HAS just come back from a wellness retreat where he switched his phone off for a week and meditated. This is the guy who made the skullet famous and ripped metal a new one with Strapping Young Lad, but onstage tonight in Bush Hall he's there with dad jeans and an acoustic guitar. On paper it's a 'what the fuck?' moment, but for the initiated this cerebral polymath, a man capable of reducing people to tears with his voice and firing their synapses and funny bones with oration that is part Tim Ferris, part Bill Burr, it makes complete sense.

Just a month ago Devin released the record of his life, *Empath*, a stupendous prog metal opus crafted from 700 separate recording tracks that by all accounts was a ballbuster of a record to create, hence the retreat. But tonight that album is simply the context, not the subject, of Devin's stripped-down performance that playfully unveils old favourites in a low-frills, intimate setting. *There's Love?*, where Devin softly lingers on the visceral lyrics then rips into a startling scream, and the heart-wrenching *Deadhead* interrupted by a bum note and a "Fuck that 5th fret up the ass". Only Hevy Devy can get away with such bathos.

Ih-Ah! finds its natural environment in the cosy cloisters of this old theatre but *Hyperdrive* latches onto a subdued cadence while *Life* regains spirit, even if Devin forgets his lyrics.

As always, Devin's vocals are spot on, inspiring applause when he reaches unfathomable high notes or screams surpassing that of most accomplished death metal frontmen and the purity of his reverb-heavy acoustic garnishes the music with a thick, emotive depth, but tonight is as much about that chat as it is about the songs. During the Q&A session Devin flits between bashful self-deprecation and verbal diarrhoea, ranging from "What's your favourite pizza topping?" (mushroom and garlic FYI) to a prosaic description of his lyrical process. But the impromptu pseudo-counselling moments about self-doubt and anxiety reveal a man as vulnerable as his doting audience. The loveliest moment arrives when he graciously receives an Otamatone from a girl in the back row and he decides to call it Ocelot. It's cute, funny and friendly and coming from a guy who will play to thousands later this year, such humility embedded in raw talent is a rare find.

HOLLY WRIGHT

TINA KORHONEN

THE BLACK DAHLIA MURDER

INGESTED

UNDERWORLD, LONDON

Michigan maulers bring the delight back into death metal

IT'S BEEN AROUND 18 months since The Black Dahlia Murder released their career-best *Nightbringers* album, and with tonight's proceedings selling out in advance it's clear that there's still a great deal of excitement about the death metal stalwarts' particular brand of nastiness. **INGESTED** warm things up nicely first. The Manchester-based quartet might lean toward deathcore slightly more than tonight's headliners, but they are suitably grotesque and sludgy enough to impress. In the 15-plus years that they've been heading to our shores it is hard to remember a single duff **THE BLACK DAHLIA MURDER** show, and, once again, they prove that they are possibly the most consistent band in extreme metal right now. Over the course of a mammoth 19-song set, there really is very little filler and barely a dip in quality. Old-school fans lose their shit to the now 16-year-old *Funeral Thirst*, but the fact that the majority of the set is made up from *Nightbringers* speaks volumes, with the opening one-two punch of *Widowmaker* and *Jars* setting the tone and bar for what follows. As great as TBDM are musically, what has always set them apart from so many of their peers is the sheer amount of infectious exuberance that the band possess in the live environment. Frontman Trevor Strnad waltzes across the stage with a massive grin on his face, imploring the pit to swing their arms with him in time to the groove of *What A Horrible Night To Have A Curse*, and when the band stop to introduce the cameraman filming the show as it is streamed across the internet live they can't help but hurl a hilarious volley of abuse at those watching at home – much to the obvious delight of everyone in the room. A predictably brilliant evening.

STEPHEN HILL

ANAAL NATHRAKH

AKERCOCKE/ITHACA/DIAMAT

GARAGE, LONDON

DIAMAT are marvellously horrible. A man in a dog collar yells sarcastic diatribes over a wall of noise and the occasional rave beat; as if Sleaford Mods had been raised on a diet of Whitehouse, Beherit and goat sacrifice. **ITHACA** are ferocious and tight. Their fractured riffing and Day-Glo beachwear doesn't quite hit the spot for this black-clad crowd but bright things surely beckon. Since returning from the abyss **AKERCOCKE** have ditched the suits, but no one is getting near those razor-edged riffs. Treading their own left-hand path through black and death metal via 80s goth, the quintet reaffirm their status as under-appreciated national treasures. Although set highlight *Of Menstrual Blood And Semen* and *Shelter From The Sand* won't see them break into to the mainstream, they'll always have a place in our hearts. Alas, technical gremlins are afoot for **ANAAL NATHRAKH**, and the Brummie bulldozers find their flow checked as mics are replaced. The delays mean that their encore is nixed by the venue curfew, but when they hit their stride, the likes of *Monstrum In Animo* and *Depravity Favours The Bold* are huge slabs of filth, hitting like a bin lorry with snapped brake cables.

ALASTAIR RIDDELL

SUFFOCATION/BELPHEGOR

UNDERWORLD, LONDON

Launching into their co-headline performance with ease, Austrian extremists **BELPHEGOR** are met with excited bellows from the crowd. Enough time has passed for inclusions from *Totenritual* to become fan favourites, and the ominous riffs and seething vocal passages of *Baphomet* and *The Devil's Son* still bubble with a welcome infliction of morbid satisfaction. Despite an atmosphere coagulated with thick smoke, the quintet seem somewhat less imposing on the Underworld's lower, more intimate stage. Thankfully, this doesn't detract from a pleasurably rotten black/death feast, served in earnest by frontman Helmuth and his cohorts. It becomes a challenge to gain a suitable vantage point for **SUFFOCATION**. The Long Island death metallers take multiple incursions into their 1991 debut *Effigy Of The Forgotten* as vocalist Ricky Myers and rhythm guitarist Charlie Errigo offer a suitably animated visual accompaniment. As the former conducts the band with jerked motions, Errigo wields his guitar like a disgruntled executioner, causing the crowd to lurch violently in response. The quintet's performance cuts with acute precision and harrowing depth, and the Europe Under Black Death Metal Fire tour concludes in London with a formidable climax.

LUKE MILNE

JAKE OWENS

IN FLAMES

NORMA JEAN, LIGHT THE TORCH

ROUNDHOUSE, LONDON

Melodeath pioneers get overshadowed by their past

PLENTY OF PUNTERS have turned up early for **LIGHT THE TORCH**'S well-executed metalcore, although it seems vocalist Howard Jones is the main draw, receiving a reception that borders on reverence. It's been three years since **NORMA JEAN** visited these shores off the back of 2016's *Polar Similar*, an album that deserved far more appreciation than it got at the time, and tonight is a blaze through their bleakly excellent back catalogue. From the tar-black riff of opener *I, The Planet*, to the deep, early Deftones-like grooves of *1,000,000 Watts*, this is a most welcome return from a band who hit a creative peak with their most recent material.

In comparison, headliners **IN FLAMES** have been in a state of perpetual defence since they deviated into radio-friendly waters with 2011's *Sounds Of A Playground Fading*. There'll always be fans who hanker after *Whoracle* Part Two, but there's still a huge level of goodwill in the Roundhouse that explodes as *Voices* powers out its opening riff. Vocally, frontman Anders Fridén is on form but he seems subdued and it takes him a while to really connect with the audience. Tellingly, that moment comes three songs in when he utters the immortal words: "We have to take you back 20 years, to an album called *Clayman*..." and everyone loses their shit to a rabid rendition of *Pinball Map*. Songs from latest album, *I, The Mask – Call My Name, Deep Inside* and especially *(This Is Our) House* – sound rather toothless on record and live they're beefed up with some much-needed bite. Yet when placed amongst the likes of *Where The Dead Ships Dwell, Leeches* and a majestic *Colony*, the quality of the new material really starts sag. And with the setlist geared so heavily towards material from the last decade, In Flames seem but a shadow of their once razor-sharp selves.

DANNII LEIVERS

Anders Fridén: blasted by the past

JAKE OWENS

SAINT VITUS
DOPELORD
UNDERWORLD, LONDON

Doom's firstborn misfits make a visceral return

PRESUMABLY HAILING FROM Poland's equivalent of Wimborne, **DOPELORD** sound eerily reminiscent of Dorset's finest. The Electric Wizard vibrations manifest themselves in huge monolithic riffs; tracks like *Children Of The Haze* and *Preacher Electrick* are fuzzed up and bone-shakingly heavy, and yet catchy and almost melodic. A steamroller you can hum.

Celebrating 40 years (give or take a few sabbaticals), LA's outsider doom legends **SAINT VITUS** return to promote a new self-titled LP, not to be confused with their debut self-titled LP. *12 Years In The Tomb*, with its pummelling drum barrage, suggests it will be a massive-sounding slab of doom. In fact, Texan powerhouse Henry Vasquez hits so hard that to he has to change snare drums about five times in an hour. Having struggled in obscurity for many years, four decades on, the sound Saint Vitus helped pioneer is bigger than ever; although amp fetishism and the low-tuning arms race has changed things somewhat. Others may be heavier sounding, but few match the visceral and emotional pull of the masters. Dave Chandler's wild-eyed acid-casualty playing is part Iommic rumble and part Black Flag discordant abuse, forever out of time and out of place. Original singer Scott Reagers may not have the star power draw of Wino, but for many he will forever be the voice of Vitus. From opener *Dark World* to all-time classics like *War Is Our Destiny* and *Burial At Sea*, with the Vasquez and ex-Crowbar/Down bassist Pat Bruders providing one of the best rhythm sections in doom, the band have never sounder more vital. They open their encore with *Born Too Late*, which remains the ultimate anthem for the those with no inclination to fit in. Saint Vitus truly are lifers; here's to another decade or two.

ALASTAIR RIDDELL

DARK BUDDHA RISING
WAYFARER
NAMBUCCA, LONDON

In terms of sheer headfuckery, it'd be tough to find a band that comes close to tonight's headliners, so it's up to Denver, Colorado's **WAYFARER** to alternately soothe and enflame your spirits instead. Thematically tied to their own native lands, and with moments of tantalising delicacy that suggests vast open spaces, the quartet's main pull, however, is the Agalloch/WITTR wave of nature-invoking BM. But for all their careful and effective use of dynamics, what they can't do, like most of their American kin, is capture the feral intensity at the movement's core, leaving them ultimately reducible down to their influences, and a little too polite. No such issues for **DARK BUDDHA RISING**. Emancipated from their latest Waste Of Space Orchestra project with fellow Tampere psychonauts Oranssi Pazuzu, tonight's set is akin to clearing your consciousness with wire wool. Tantrically drawn-out doom at their heart, mad cosmic seers in practice – with vocalist Marko Neuman a suitably frazzled presence behind banks of hair – DBR are a transfixing live experience. Songs expand at a near-excruciating pace, infiltrated by radioactive sonic debris, palpitating rhythms emerge like an existential panic and tonight they take you out of yourself, with no clear route back.

JONATHAN SELZER

PUPPY
GREEN LUNG/ DIRT
THE EXCHANGE, BRISTOL

The Exchange is a bastion of sweat and riffs as local grunge trio **DIRT** get tonight's ball rolling. Despite the devious work of some pesky sound goblins, the trio are a flurry of hit and misses who still seem to be finding their footing as a whole. Brimming with charisma, the Sabbath-infused Satanic boom of **GREEN LUNG** shakes Bristol to the core. Using the tritone as their personal playground, the sounds of old echo with a punchy new flavour that understands how to deliver mega-groove riffs that gets the floor bouncing. Walking through the crowd like prize fighters, **PUPPY** take us down the yellow riff road with a set that shows off their latest album, *The Goat*. Singer/guitarist Jock Norton takes a few songs to get into the swing of things while drummer Billy Howard practically smashes himself into his kit on every beat. Busting out the XXL tunes like *Nightwalker* has never been Puppy's problem, this evening being no exception, however their melancholic execution dampens the impact of their prize belters. Not their worst set by far, but a touch more of that Puppy charm and tonight would've been a homerun.

HYWEL DAVIES

SAINT VITUS: WILL IRELAND. PAP ROACH: DEREK BREMNER.

PAPA ROACH

NOTHING MORE

FORUM, KENTISH TOWN

Revived nu metallers find the passion runs deep

BASED ON THE 20-year-long precedent established by tonight's headliners, the Forum is bubbling with impatience for some catchy, cathartic and charismatic rock'n'roll. They don't have to wait long, though, as **NOTHING MORE** arrive to instantly put smiles on faces and shoot arses out of seats. Granted, this Texan four-piece may specialise in a more progressive method – integrating electronic music and wacky percussion – than Kentish Town's attendees may be used to, but their showmanship instantly wins over the crowd. No time is wasted before the flashy excess begins, as frontman Jonny Hawkins kicks off the set by hanging from a 12-foot-tall metal scaffold. For most bands, this would be the apex, but Nothing More proceed to barrel through an exhilarating 45 minutes, peaking with the aggressive *This Is The Time* and the Grammy-nodded *Go To War*. The response to these heavy rock upstarts is so enthusiastic that it plants the idea that merely being a warm-up act at the Forum is beneath them. With a little splash of luck, their next album will probably see them headlining this place.

PAPA ROACH, however, feel totally within their element as they take to the stage. While most nu metal bands of their ilk – who enjoyed their commercial peak almost two decades ago – try to escape from their mostly nostalgic appeal, Jacoby Shaddix and co initially wear it as a badge of honour. There's an explosion of excitement as the veterans arrive to the sound of the legendary chart-smasher *Last Resort*, followed shortly afterward by 2004's swaggering *Getting Away With Murder*. Jacoby is as encouraging as you'd expect, consistently demanding movement, pits and headbanging from a crowd who are all too happy to indulge. Sadly, the awe and energy of this first half begins to dissipate midway through the evening. A triumvirate of newer tracks – *Elevate, Not The Only One* and *Traumatic* – kills the momentum and doesn't command the same interaction and reverence as the older counterparts. It isn't until the very last song of the main set, *...To Be Loved*, that proceedings return to their former glories, which are then excelled even further by a heartfelt cover of The Prodigy's *Firestarter* to commence the encore. Thereafter, an armada of classics sees London out, ending on a merciful high.

MATT MILLS

Battle Beast's Noora Louhimo: formidable

BATTLE BEAST

THE DOME, LONDON

Finnish power metallers keep adjusting the gauge

STORMING THE STAGE dressed up to the nines in silver and supporting a rather impressive horned headdress, **BATTLE BEAST** vocalist Noora Louhimo inspires a tidal wave of roars within the crowd. This space-age Valkyrie is the undisputed star of the show, and it's easy to see why – she commands the room with her huge voice and a formidable stage presence even through the perpetual surges of mist escaping from the onstage fog machines. Unfortunately, the rest of the band lean heavily on her strengths. Midway through the set, the Finns play a bunch of back-to-back love ballads and it's not particularly appreciated by the crowd. It's a Tuesday night, and while the sea of battle jacket-sporting fans love the upbeat tracks, passionately dancing and screaming out every lyric, the slower songs are sending them into a mid-week slump. When Noora exits the stage, the guitar players struggle to wow the crowd in her absence. It's the perfect opportunity for a power metal solo, but instead the two guitarists are just filling the void left by two minutes sans singer. Luckily, the energy picks up again when Noora returns, belting out *The Golden Horde*. Keytarist Janne Björkroth drags out a bizarre contraption – a keytar stand-cum-drumkit – complete with a minibar full of gin and tonic. At last the band emerge from their frontwoman's shadow, pouring themselves drinks and egged on to "chug" by the crowd. Cue *The Hero* and Noora is back on form, forcing her guitarist to drop to the floor and perform press-ups for the song's entirety. They announce their new record, and a return to the UK this November – much to their dedicated followers' delight. This isn't a 'serious' heavy metal band, but if you're in the mood for some light-hearted poppy singalongs and an interactive spectacle, Battle Beast might just win you over. A bigger venue, though, and it's doubtful they'd reign quite so supreme.

ALICE PATTILLO

HELHEIM
VULTURE INDUSTRIES/MADDER MORTEM
UNICORN, LONDON

Norway's porous boundary between metal and prog has long been a thrillingly creative territory, and rarely to as much involving effect as Hedmark's **MADDER MORTEM**. Perhaps unsung in the wider world, but beloved of all who cross their many paths, they've drawn a rapt, all-ages crowd. As ever, Agnete Kirkevaag is the focal point, her face an ever-changing map of the emotional terrain the band cover, even wiping away a tear at one point, and her velveteen, port-rich voice every bit as intimate and turbulent as the music. Bergen's **VULTURE INDUSTRIES** also seem to exist in their own, fully furnished universe, as immersive as it is open-ended. Part Brechtian journey through a world gone awry, part eccentric, Vaudevillian lunacy (culminating in conga line), but all wide-eyed wonder and generous heart, their playfulness takes on an epic grandeur, woven around Bjørnar Nilsen's resonant baritone. **HELHEIM** have ditched the chainmail of yore, and it's clearly lifted a weight off them sonically, too. Older songs still have a mid-paced force of determination, but the romanticism at their root has blossomed into a wanderlust whose hints of Sólstafir are but one element taking them beyond their Viking metal roots and into tantalising new realms.

JONATHAN SELZER

H09909
RELENTLESS GARAGE, LONDON

It's already been discussed at length, but **H09909** are a wildly entertaining live band. Tonight's sold-out show builds to a dizzying climax, and places H09909 in a category of live acts that are genuine chaos-makers. As soon as the opening *Is It Safe To Internet?* lights the fuse, the band take everyone through a tour of some of alternative music's most exciting live bands, recalling, at various points, Bad Brains, Primal Scream, NWA, Dead Kennedys, Public Enemy and The Stooges. Dual frontmen theOGM and Eaddy are incredible focal points, like watching Wu Tang Clan's Ol' Dirty Bastard and Minor Threat's Ian Mackaye fighting onstage for attention. And when the band drop a medley of *Smack My Bitch Up*, *Breathe* and *Firestarter* at the end of the main set, even the bar staff and security look like they are about ready to trash the Garage along with everyone else. In fact, watching such an unorthodox band playing these songs with such wanton aggression to such a hyped crowd, you get a sense of what it must have been like to see The Prodigy in a tiny 500-capacity venue. There aren't many bands you could say the same about.

STEPHEN HILL

BATTLE BEAST: DEREK BREMNER. BOSS KELOID: JAMES SHARROCK.

Boss Keloid weave their magic

HOLY REEFER 420 FEST

BOSTON MUSIC ROOM, LONDON

Wigan prog/psych wayfarers highlight the depth of Holy Roar's roster

HOLY ROAR'S REPUTATION might be founded on artfully edged missives orbiting the punk and hardcore worlds, but tonight's showcase reveals that the most genuine of mission statements are open-minded at heart. Openers **WATCHCRIES** might be fully aligned with the label's core ethos, but they are clearly a band in their infancy. Driven by palpitating blasts and drilled riffs, their blackened screeds pile up into juddering grooves, as vocalist Nats Spada rasps like she's trying to claw her way out of the melee. But it's a monotone affair with overly linear dynamics, and Nat's yet to build the charisma to take the fight to the crowd. Somewhat broader in scope, **HAAST'S EAGLED** massage desert rock into a host of different forms. Adam Wrench's vocals range from Jeff Buckley-esque lilt to bluesy holler as songs layer on riffs to mantric effect, descend into doomy lurches and do everything they can to rise above the sum of the parts. If they're not always tight enough to weave outright magic, there's a room full of devoted, nodding heads testifying to the power they are able to sum up. **SECRET CUTTER**'s debut London show has already ratcheted up the anticipation to breaking point, and the crowd explodes the moment they lurch into *Bended Knee*. Unleashing a potent combination of thick-set sludge and nerve-frying grind, the Pennsylvanians' sheer heft reels you in as if they have a particularly uncooperative Great White at the other end. Evan Moray's coruscating vocals pull at huge, heaving grooves determined to club you repeatedly into submission, and it's a frighteningly fun overload of aural roughage that leaves everyone in a state of battered euphoria.

Wisely taking a detour around the long, post-rock shadow cast by Isis, **PIJN**'s meticulous weighing up of tension and release cleaves to the more mystic likes of Guapo, if never quite leaving their clutches either. Not that they're rarely anything less than enchanting tonight, the percolating, pitter-patter rhythms gathering themselves until they surge into far-flung demonstrations of off-kilter, minor-key fireworks. Headliners **BOSS KELOID** are also determined to rearrange your co-ordinates, and if there's a kernel of Soundgarden at the heart of their sound, it's displaced into proggy, speculative pastures buoyed by Alex Hurst's genial presence and one of the best, blues-singed voices in our scene today. Sprawling, beguiling and riven with deep humanity, Boss Keloid cast the most open-ended of spells.

JONATHAN SELZER

FIVE MINUTES WITH SPENCER SOTELO PERIPHERY

Don't do drugs (outside), kids, mmmkay?

WORDS: STEPHEN HILL

What's the worst thing about being in a band?
"Definitely your sleep deprivation from being in other countries with weird time zones. But there really is nothing else bad about being in a band – 99% of the time, it's great! You might go out drinking and then feel like maybe it was a bad idea when you're soundchecking the next day, but no regrets, right?"

What's the best piece of advice you've ever been given?
"That you'd better be in it for the music, because you sure as hell aren't going to make any money from being in a metal band, certainly in this day and age."

When was the first time you felt like a rock star?
"I would say, 2012 in the Philippines at a festival called Pulp Summer Slam. We got asked to go and we didn't know anything about it, we just were stoked that we got to go to the Philippines, and when we got there it was like, this Metallica shit! This walkway that goes out into the crowd, this huge stage, the jumbotron screens. That was the first time that I was like, 'Whoah!' I feel like everyone should get the chance to feel that feeling once in their life."

What's been your worst experience on drugs?
"I don't like being high in public. I'll smoke a bit of weed with my wife and put on Netflix, that's fine. But I don't like being out in public feeling stoned, so it's pretty much every time I step outside the house when I'm in that state. I'd never do it before we play. I did do it once and it was not good, my voice shrivelled up and I sounded like a dying cat. It was panic attack time."

When was the last time you cried?
"Probably four or five days ago. I had a very emotional night with my friend talking about some very personal stuff. My sister passed away a couple of years ago and we had a night talking about that. But I don't want to go too deep into that, if I'm honest."

"I SOUNDED LIKE A DYING CAT"

Do you still feel like you're part of the tech-metal scene?
"Well, it's still out there, and there are still a lot of bands out there doing that thing. But I don't know; I feel like we're more of a progressive metal band than one of those bands, personally. We look at the songwriting rather than the 'tech' aspect of it."

How did you feel about your Grammy nomination in 2017?
"It's a weird thing that none of us ever expected to happen at all. It was really cool; who would have thought that a band from that scene could reach that far? And we've just seen our friends in Between The Buried And Me get nominated, too, and they're even deeper down that rabbit hole. It's cool to see the people who do the ballots being a bit more open-minded."

What did you do on the night of the awards?
"We went on tour in Australia! It was way more important to us. We knew we weren't going to win, Megadeth were obviously going to win."

How seriously do you take your music? There's a lot of internet humour in there.
"Well, we spend so much time spending creating the best piece of art we possibly can, but we like to sprinkle it with humour because you should never take yourself too seriously. I don't trust anyone who takes themselves so seriously that they don't let their own personality come through in their music, you know, we laugh and joke and fart when we're on tour, why the hell shouldn't we show that side of ourselves as well? Just be a person, you know?" H

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